THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES ENTER STAGE LEFT Ryan Lizza

THE NEW REPUBLIC

WHY BEIJING CAN'T PRESSURE NORTH KOREA Jasper Becker

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EBRUARY 3, 2003

TOWERS OF BABEL

HOW NOT TO REBUILD GROUND ZERO

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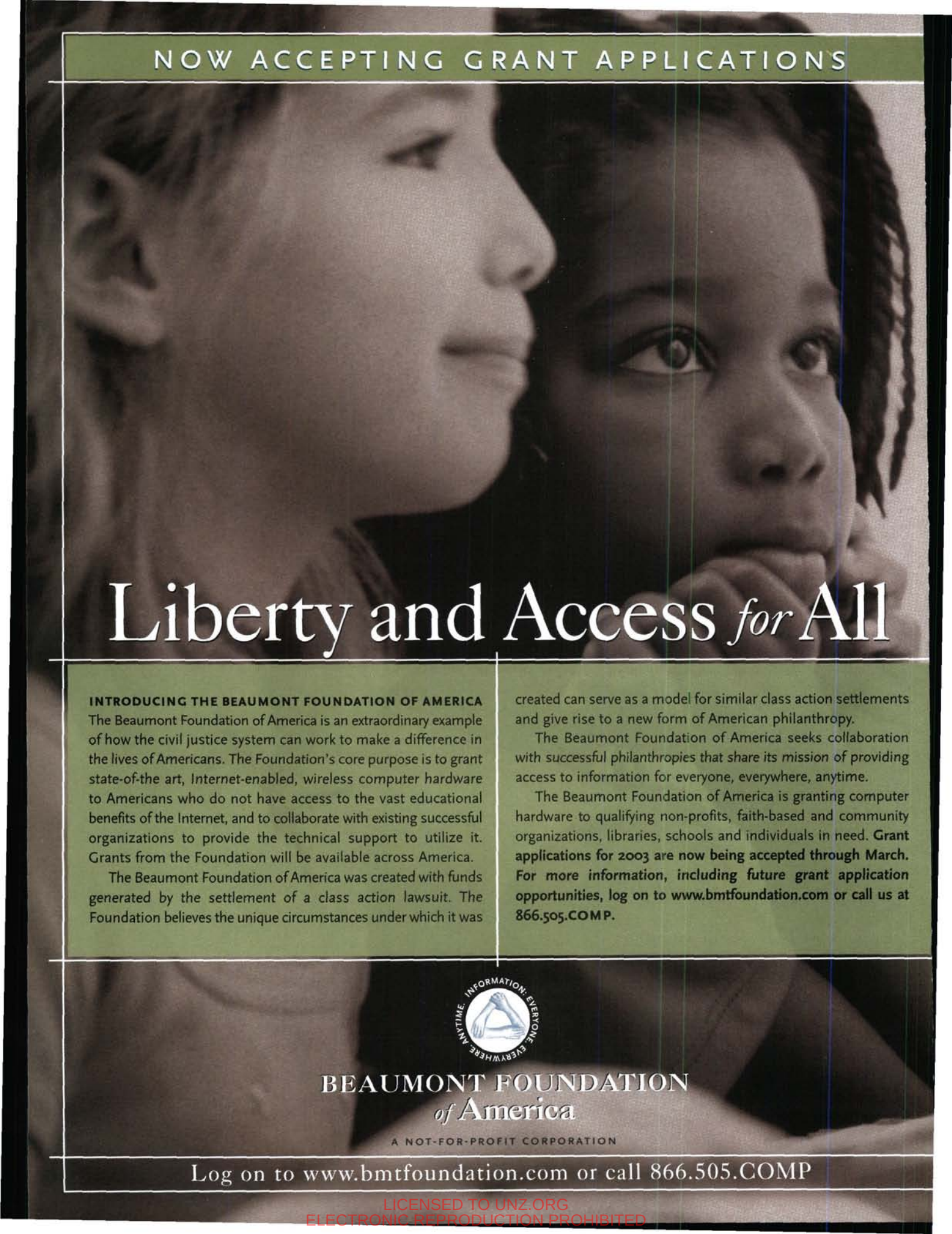
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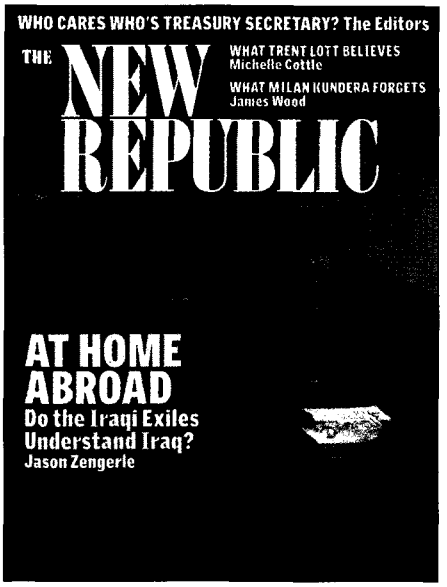
Immune response

TO THE EDITORS:

Leon Wieseltier writes that "[William F.] Buckley is the most distinguished anti-anti-Semite in American Catholicism" ("Unconcern," November 11). That being my credential, you can understand my perplexity. He writes that an "affirmation of the Christian mission to the Jews is a delegitimation of Jewish belief [and] is downright un-American." In expanding his position, he goes on to say, "I have never encountered an idea more unacceptable to my frail, sweating mind than the idea of the Incarnation, of the paternity of God, of the word made flesh. I have always been grateful that this philosophical absurdity is not my problem."

But surely it is a problem not only for those who do not believe but for those who do. He finds philosophically absurd a doctrine espoused by Augustine, Aquinas, Newman, and Sullivan, whose thought, and premises for that thought, is a part of the warp and woof of a common culture. How does one contend against the dismissal of the Christian religion without advancing its propositions? And this



cannot be done without affirming the Incarnation—and praying that such an affirmation can be done without imprecating other religions, which, in the nature of things, are mutually exclusive.

What brought this on was the shallow statement of a U.S. Catholic Bishops committee to the effect that no Christian should exert himself in any attempt to convert Jews inasmuch as they already "abide in covenant with God." "Buckley will have none of this decency," Wieseltier moans. "He hunted down the [Catholic committee's] heterodoxy in a column last month." Yes, and so, later on, did Cardinal Keeler, who is in charge of the superintending committee of theologians. He disavowed, in effect, the theological anemia of the committee and restored the sanity of those who, believing in the Incarnation, necessarily believe that its meaning extends to all men.

It happens that I am reading at the moment Norman Podhoretz's book *The Prophets*. "I will be quoting," he writes, "many of those words" of the Old Testament prophets "whose incandescent beauty and awful power ultimately vanquished an enemy as insidious and seductive as he was cruel and evil: the enemy they knew as idolatry." There is no reason why Christians should be indifferent to idolatry, or why gentle Leon should think, in insisting on immunity from those who plead the meaning of the Incarnation, that idolatry is someone else's problem.

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.
New York, New York

LEON WIESELTIER REPLIES:

What is wrong with opposing on philosophical grounds a notion that is "part of the warp and woof of a common culture"? Another name for such opposition is thought. Culture can hallow propositions, but it cannot verify them. Indeed, culture thrives on fictions and fantasies, and the social or spiritual utility of these fictions and fantasies does not make them true. I suspect that Buckley is unaware of how much he is conceding to heathen reason when he appeals to culture to vouch for the truth of what he believes.

Gentile Bill (excuse me, gentle Bill) also exaggerates the quantity of Christianity that goes into the American commonality. It is ludicrous to hold that our "common culture" stands or falls on the idea of the Incarnation. If it did, it would have fallen long ago. My own non-Christian tradition is wholly adequate for the conceptions of truth and justice and freedom that I require to join the discussion; and, more importantly, there are Americans whose conceptions of truth and justice and freedom are perfectly godless in origin and in substance, and yet they are legitimately and profitably in the thick of the discussion.

I will confess that I do not see any pathos in the "problem" that believers,

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Blind Spot

THE DEBATE OVER affirmative action, resuscitated last week by the Bush administration's intervention in the University of Michigan case, is a little like the debate over divestment from Israel. Some people oppose divestment because they claim Ariel Sharon's government hasn't done anything wrong. But the more common anti-divestment argument is that *even if Sharon's government has done something wrong*, it should not be singled out for censure while other, far worse regimes get off scot-free. Addressing the divestment campaigners in *The New York Times* last October, Thomas Friedman wrote, "You are also hypocrites. . . . How is it that Syria occupies Lebanon for 25 years, chokes the life out of its democracy, and not a single student group calls for divestiture from Syria?"

At the 2000 GOP convention in Philadelphia, Colin Powell hurled essentially the same hypocrisy charge at his fellow Republicans. "We must understand the cynicism that exists in the black community," Powell said. "The kind of cynicism that is created when, for example, some in our party miss no opportunity to roundly and loudly condemn affirmative action that helped a few thousand black kids get an education, but you hardly hear a whimper over affirmative action for lobbyists who load our federal tax code with preferences for special interests." Powell didn't quite say affirmative action was fair; he said it was hypocritical to single out preferences for blacks while leaving other, deeper preferences intact.

At the convention, Powell appealed to Republicans to stop talking about affirmative action in a vacuum as the primary blemish on an otherwise meritocratic and color-blind society. And that remains the GOP's problem today. The next time you hear a Republican denouncing racial preferences at the University of Michigan, test his or her moral consistency with three simple questions.

Have you denounced other identity-based preferences in college admissions? Republicans make a big deal of the fact that under Michigan's numerically based admissions system, black applicants get points just for being black. But students also get points for being from different regions of the country or even different parts of the state. In fact, applicants from Michigan's rural, overwhelmingly white Upper Peninsula get almost as large a preference as blacks—although hailing from a certain region says as little about the content of an applicant's character as does her pigmentation. Geographic preferences may not be as constitutionally vulnerable as racial ones, but surely they are just as unfair. And yet I have never seen a speech by a Republican politician or read a column by a conservative journalist denouncing geographic discrimination.

And, if geographic preferences are as bad as racial preferences, surely parental preferences are worse. At least discrimination in favor of blacks, Hispanics, or kids from rural areas tends to benefit the less privileged—and therefore fosters upward mobility. By contrast, parental discrimination—favoring the children of alumni—generally benefits the wealthy and therefore stifles upward mobility. This kind of affirmative action more often benefits people who vote Republican—it probably got George W. Bush into Yale. Last fall, Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards denounced it as "a birthright out of eighteenth-century British aristocracy." Why have I never heard a Republican politician or a conservative pundit do the same?

Do you believe in color-blindness across the board? Affirmative action opponents might distinguish racial preferences from geographic and parental ones by claiming that, given this country's terrible history, there is something especially toxic about classifying people by race. The problem with that retort is that Republicans and conservatives are perfectly willing to classify people by race when it serves policy goals they like. Many conservative commentators have endorsed some racial profiling of black motorists, given that those drivers are statistically more likely to be transporting drugs, and some racial profiling of black or Hispanic teenagers, given that those teens are more likely to be selling them. And, since September 11, 2001, numerous Republican politicians and conservative pundits have demanded the profiling of Arabs and Muslims on the grounds that they are statistically more likely to be terrorists. Whether such profiling is effective is not the point. After all, Republicans don't primarily criticize affirmative action as ineffective. They criticize it as unjust, as a violation of the sacred principle of color-blindness. Yet, in other contexts—when color-blindness would undermine their security, rather than black kids' upward mobility—Republicans all of a sudden don't deem color-blindness so sacred after all.

There's a third, even more basic, litmus test for Republican critics of affirmative action: *Have you denounced the affirmative action in your own party?* After all, the 2000 Republican convention was as flagrant an expression of racial preferences as anything taking place in Ann Arbor. Only three Republican governors and four Republican senators received prime-time speaking slots. Instead, the convention's first night featured Paul C. Harris Sr., an obscure African American state legislator from Virginia, and its last featured Abel Maldonado, an obscure Hispanic state legislator from California. Can anyone seriously claim that anything qualified them for the slots besides their race? Or that all the white politicians for whom such a speech would have constituted a major career boost weren't disadvantaged as a result?

Since President Bush took office, Republican reverse discrimination has only intensified. Bush has appointed an African American secretary of education who had never held federal or even state office and a Hispanic secretary of housing and urban development who had never held office above the county level. (When Bush's first choice for secretary of labor bowed out, he selected another nonwhite woman: Can anyone say quota?) In the wake of Trent Lott's downfall, Republican National Chairman Marc Racicot earlier this month vowed to appoint more blacks to positions in the GOP. Given that politically experienced black Republicans are about as common as black college applicants with perfect SAT scores, Racicot has virtually pledged to discriminate against more qualified whites. What Bush and Racicot realize, of course, is that racial preferences can help Republicans appeal to black, and even some white, voters. But, if affirmative action is justified when it helps the political fortunes of the GOP, why isn't it justified when it helps create a racially diverse college campus?

Republicans aren't wrong to espouse merit and color-blindness. They're wrong to espouse merit and color-blindness while ignoring the ways in which they violate those principles themselves. That's what Colin Powell meant more than two years ago in Philadelphia. And, more than two years later, his party still doesn't understand.

PETER BEINART

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No Exit

WAR, AS THE old adage goes, should be a last resort. And, as the moment for a final decision on war with Iraq draws near, American officials are preparing to argue that they have exhausted every other avenue in their attempts to disarm Saddam Hussein. But, in recent days, it has become apparent that there is one avenue some American officials still seem eager to travel down: allowing Saddam to go into exile.

Last weekend, administration officials signaled that the United States would look favorably on a scenario in which Saddam stepped down—or was removed in a coup—and given safe haven in a third country. "This whole situation would be resolved if Saddam Hussein and all those around him who think like him ... would leave," Secretary of State Colin Powell said on CNN's "Late Edition." Appearing on ABC's "This Week," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld elaborated, "I would ... recommend that some provision be made so that the senior leadership in that country and their families could be provided haven in some other country. And I think that that would be a fair trade to avoid a war."

No, it wouldn't. While no one relishes a war, avoiding one by allowing Saddam to go into exile would mean abandoning the very principles that have rightfully led the United States to the brink of conflict in the first place. To begin with, even if Saddam physically left, it's doubtful his political influence and Baathist ideology would go with him. Saddam might engineer events so that his successor would be someone reasonably close to him. From exile, he could pull the putative Iraqi leader's strings, much like Bosnian Serb leaders tried to do after they stepped down from power and were succeeded by their associates. And, even if Saddam did not get his choice of successors, his very existence—living in exile, serving as a rallying point for anti-American Iraqis—could destabilize a new government. Think how much more precarious Hamid Karzai's position would be if Mullah Omar was living openly, and inciting rebellion, from refuge in Karachi.

American officials, working with Iraqi exiles, have reportedly drawn up a list of the "filthy 40"—the worst members of Saddam's regime, all of whom would be unacceptable as Saddam's successor. But Iraq's Baath Party is much larger than 40 people; it predates Saddam's rule; and, as Kanan Makiya reveals in his book *Republic of Fear*, it has spread its ideology and its tentacles of violence throughout the country, implicating hundreds of thousands of people in its crimes. "Iraqi society, unlike that of other Third World countries, evolved by compromising people in the violence of the Ba'th, by sucking them into the agencies of the secret police, army, and militia," Makiya writes. Simply getting rid of Saddam and a few other top leaders would not guarantee that a lower-level Baath member might not rise to power, the type of party cadre who would prevent the kind of de-Baathification that Iraq badly needs. Indeed, there's no guarantee that Saddam's successor, if drawn from the Baath, could even be trusted to disarm. As Powell conceded, "The challenge before us then would be to see whether or not that new regime would commit itself to eliminating weapons of mass destruction, satisfying the international community that they are interested in the welfare of their people and not in threatening their own people or threatening their neighbors."

But what if the new Iraqi regime fulfilled only two of these criteria—eliminating its weapons of mass destruction and ceasing to threaten its neighbors but continuing to ignore the welfare of its people? Then the United States would have a regime in Baghdad much like the one in the early '80s, when Saddam terrorized his people but was nevertheless viewed as an ally of the United States and championed by the same realist Republicans the Bush neoconservatives now disavow. This acceptance of a post-Saddam dictator would rightly be seen by Iraqis struggling for freedom as yet another U.S. betrayal. It is often said that America's greatest challenge in Iraq is not dispatching Saddam; it is in helping rebuild Iraq as a modern, liberal state after his departure. The realpolitik exile scenario abandons that project.

Indeed, it is worth looking at who is pushing the exile scenario most forcefully: the Saudis. As *Time* magazine reported last week, Crown Prince Abdullah recently invited Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gul and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to Riyadh to discuss ways in which Arab states might pressure Saddam to step aside. The Saudis have no love for Saddam, but they are deeply worried about a democratic Iraq, which would put real pressure on the House of Saud to reform. Their worry is America's hope, and we should not abandon it by allowing Saddamism to outlive Saddam. ■

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NOTEBOOK

IN LIKE A LAMB, OUT LIKE A LION: President George W. Bush has had no greater critic of late than that old Democratic warhorse Ted Kennedy. In an address at the National Press Club this week, Kennedy summarized his ever growing list of grudges against the president, deploring Bush's foreign and domestic policies and urging his timid fellow Democrats to "stand up and speak out." Kennedy particularly groused, as he now often does, that Bush is shortchanging the sweeping education reform law he promoted and signed to such fanfare in 2001. "[W]hen the klieg lights go out and the bunting comes down and the cameras leave, the money isn't there," Kennedy railed. "Needed resources for education are denied, even as new tax breaks for the wealthy are sought." Well, surprise, surprise! Some liberals tried to warn Kennedy that this is precisely what would happen, back when the senator was making ill-advised policy concessions to Bush in exchange for the promise of future school funding (see Michael Crowley, "Teddy Bear," August 13, 2001). But Kennedy, apparently feeling the need to be a "player" on education, ignored the warnings and provided Bush with the essential cover for his plan (the passage of which, among other things, has all but ended the traditional Democratic political advantage on education). More generally, Kennedy was one of the first Democrats to fall for Bush's calculated January 2001 "charm offensive," joining his new chum for a movie at the White House and lending the court-installed president vital early credibility. "He's personable, he's intelligent, he's sort of feisty, and he's engaged," Kennedy offered back then. "It would be a mistake for Democrats to underestimate George Bush." As Kennedy has belatedly learned, perhaps the real mistake was in overestimating him.

CAREFREE: Last week offered yet another example of the Bush administration's ongoing effort to drain every ounce of compassion from the U.S. health care system. The president, *The New York Times* reported, has decided to rescind a Clinton-era regulation that guaranteed Medicaid patients access to emergency care. Under one of the better-known provisions of the regulation, private HMOs covering Medicaid patients were required to pay for an emergency room visit anytime a "prudent layperson"—i.e., somebody acting sensibly, with a layman's knowledge of medicine—had reason to think they had a bona fide emergency. Previously, an HMO could deny coverage if, say, a person with severe stomach cramps went to the E.R. thinking he was having appendicitis, only to learn later that it was just bad indigestion. Now Bush has repealed the regulation, ostensibly to increase "flexibility" and "facilitate more appropriate use of preventive care and primary care" at a time of great fiscal strain. That, of course, is just a polite way of saying that Bush will now let the states restrict emergency care however they want—which, apparently, is what several states intend to do. The *Times* reports, for example, that Louisiana is planning to limit Medicaid patients to three emergency visits per year. (If that sounds reasonable, then you don't know anybody with a chronic or debilitating disease—anything from asthma to certain cancers—which can easily cause multiple emergency visits within two or three months, let alone a whole year.) The states making these cuts are hardly blameless: Many of them passed tax cuts when the economy was booming, leaving them too poor to afford Medicaid services now that the economy has slowed and tax revenue has dried up. On the other hand, it's not as if they can do anything about it now. Most state constitutions require a balanced budget, and raising taxes during a recession isn't exactly a smart idea, either. That's why the federal government usually provides special assistance to the states during recessions—something this administration refuses to do even as it clamors for a $600 billion tax cut for investors and other upper-income taxpayers. But that's only the half of it. This turns out to be a classic Bush twofer: Not only is he sticking it to the have-nots, but he's going back on a campaign promise, too. As you may recall, then-candidate Bush spent a lot of time on the campaign trail boasting about the managed care reforms he'd passed in Texas—and promising to enact them on a federal level once he got into office. As a campaign press release from August 31, 2000, noted, "As President, Governor Bush will enact comprehensive patient protections similar to those already enacted in Texas." And those Texas regulations, the release went on to explain, "required coverage and payment of emergency services. HMOs must adhere to the 'prudent layperson' definition of emergency care; pay for emergency care services provided by non-network providers at the negotiated or customary rate; and approve or disapprove emergency care within one hour." As president, Bush reiterated this promise in a June 2001 radio address, saying that everybody should be able "to get emergency treatment at the nearest emergency room." Apparently, "everybody" doesn't include people on Medicaid. Imagine that.

YELLOW JOURNAL: Intellectual dishonesty and moral obtuseness on *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page definitely fall under the category of dog-bites-man. But a recent *Journal* effort has managed to surpass its low standards to such a degree that a new category may have to be invented. (Dog-eats-man?) Two months ago, the *Journal* bemoaned the "lucky duckies" who earn too little to pay income taxes (see Jonathan Chait, "Get Lucky," December 23, 2002). This week, the *Journal* defended its earlier claim. The new editorial begins with an outright falsehood: "[T]he Bush proposals would make the tax code more progressive, not less." In fact, the top 1 percent of taxpayers would have their tax burden slashed by 9 percent, the middle quintile would have its taxes cut by 4.5 percent, and the lowest quintile would have its taxes cut by 0.8 percent. The *Journal* then proceeds with some technically true but highly dubious claims of the sort that might appear in a primer titled *How to Lie With Statistics.* The editors write that "taxpayers with incomes over $200,000 could expect on average to pay about $99,000 in

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taxes under Mr. Bush's plan." This sentence is clearly designed to frighten upper-middle-class readers into thinking they might pay nearly half their income in taxes. But, of course, the category of "taxpayers with incomes over $200,000" includes Bill Gates; his taxes, and those of the super-wealthy generally, have a rather dramatic effect on the *Journal*'s "average." (The *Journal*'s statistic is about as meaningful as asserting that males over the age of six have had an average of three sexual partners.) Finally, the editors insist that their anger against "lucky duckies" was actually a defense of "the notion that people with identical incomes should pay the same amount in taxes." The *Journal* now points out that, thanks to deductions, a single mother with two children would not owe taxes, while a single mother with one child would. "Compared to the single mom who must pay taxes," the editors write, "the single mom who does not is, well, a lucky ducky." This doesn't exactly strike us as a monumental injustice. But the real point is that this is explicitly *not* the kind of "luck" the *Journal*'s first editorial—which specifically cited "a person [who] earns $12,000"—was referring to. Do the *Journal*'s editors no longer believe that such people are "lucky duckies" because they pay little or no taxes? Or are they just no longer willing to admit it?

POLL POSITION: "I don't run my administration based upon polls and focus groups. I'm running this war against terror based upon freedom and doing my obligation to make sure our children can grow up in a free and safe society."—George W. Bush, December 4, 2002

"*The Washington Post* reported today, 57-41 support for using force. In December it was 62-35; in September it was 61-34. And you go back in time and find that the numbers in *The Washington Post* poll have fluctuated within that very narrow range of upper 50s to low 60s of support for use of force. That is a strong majority of the American people. Fox poll, January of '03, 67-25; October, 62-27; Pew poll, 68-25; October, 55-34. According to Pew, it's gone up dramatically. CBS, January of '03, 64-30; October, 64-25. CNN-USA-Gallup, January of '03, 56-38; October, 54-40. CNN-*Time*, 60-33 in January; 57-33 in November. So, according to CNN-*Time*, it's actually gone up. ... I can take the data back even farther, if you want to go back—in August, the numbers remain the same.... But we don't pay attention to polls."—A "senior administration official," briefing reporters on support for the use of force in Iraq, January 22

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: In last week's issue, the excellent Bill Frist illustration on page 16 lacked a credit line. It was by Charlie Powell. We regret the omission. ■

Inside the Box | Bruce Reed

LET'S MAKE A DEAL (I)

Administration and Arab leaders hint Saddam could get asylum and amnesty if he steps down. New definition of regime change: Saddam moves into someone else's palace.

LET'S MAKE A DEAL (II)

Bush shifts again on N. Korea. Only constant: "It will take more than nuclear blackmail to get me to admit I'm doing the same thing as Clinton."

WOLVERINE

Bush intervenes in Michigan case, says preferences should be based on class, not on race: "It's easy to avoid quotas if you do what I do—just help anyone who's wealthy."

TRIAGE

Administration limits Medicaid emergency room visits: "The poor will just have to understand—Dr. Frist is a very busy man."

SAFETY LAST

GOP cuts funding for homeland security: "If people feel safe, we won't be able to make it a campaign issue."

DRIVING MISS ARIANNA

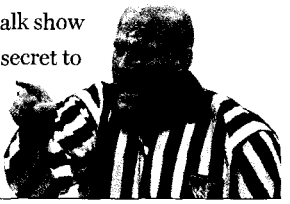
Hollywood celebs join Huffington crusade that SUVs help terrorists. (Sean showed it's much more efficient to go to Baghdad and support them directly.)

THE BIG HOUSE

Sentencing commission sets tough penalties for breaking the new campaign finance reform law. White House reaction: "Maybe someday the president will have a chance to use that pardon power after all."

THE BODY

Jesse Ventura to host talk show on MSNBC: "That's the secret to politics on cable—it's pro wrestling without the entertainment."



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How big was the rally?
Count Down

By NOAM SCHEIBER

THERE WAS SOMETHING a little off about an exchange on ABC's "This Week" last Sunday morning. Commentator Michel Martin had just finished explaining why it would be a mistake to dismiss the brewing antiwar sentiment when George Stephanopoulos wondered whether it was "having any political effect." "I think it's noteworthy how many people, how many thousands of people, have come out in advance of the fact that there's been any conflicts," Martin responded, referring to the antiwar march on the National Mall the day before. "Very unusual in American history."

Well, *how many thousands* of people were there? Martin never said. Neither, for that matter, did any of the major dailies. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times* all led their antiwar stories that day with allusions to "tens of thousands" of protesters. But the closest any organization came to hammering down an official number was when the Associated Press. identified 30,000 protesters who, according to U.S. Capitol Police estimates, trekked from the Mall to the Washington Navy Yard. (Capitol police later disavowed the estimate.) When paired with the 500,000 estimate favored by many march organizers, the range of figures was far too wide to be useful. Is the antiwar movement gathering steam or petering out? No one can honestly say.

It wasn't always like this. For decades, the National Park Service served as the official arbiter of attendance statistics for marches on the Mall. The problem was that these estimates were based on little more than impressions—the "SWAG" system (Scientific Wild-Ass Guess), as longtime Park Service Spokesman George Berklacy once put it—making them susceptible to lobbying from organizers. So, in the late '80s, the Park Service set out to add some heft to its methodology. Instead of just eyeballing the crowd, U.S. Park Police would divide the mall into a grid and take pictures from helicopters and from atop the Washington Monument to arrive at a reasonable density for each square. For good measure, they checked their estimate against the number of buses used to transport marchers to the area and with any uptick in subway ridership.

But the more accurate the Park Service tried to make its estimates, the more flak it took. In April of 1989, abortion-rights advocates staged a massive march on the Mall, which, they claimed, attracted more than 600,000 people. That was about double what Park Police had estimated, and organizers complained of political meddling by higher-ups in the anti-abortion Bush administration. The following year, the Park Service found itself under attack from the other side, as anti-abortion activists held their own rally and were incensed to be credited with a showing of only 200,000.

The dam broke in 1995, the year Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan staged his Million Man March—which looked a lot like 400,000 to the Park Police. Farrakhan cried racism and threatened to sue the federal government. And, when ABC News hired a respected Boston University professor by the name of Farouk El-Baz to look over the Park Service's numbers, it looked like he might have a legitimate gripe (if not much of a legal case). Working from Park Service imaging but with more accurate assumptions about population density, El-Baz generated an estimate of roughly 800,000, with a margin of error of 20 percent. Before long, the Park Service was asking El-Baz how to improve its techniques. But, when he said that a truly accurate estimate would require a multimillion dollar investment in fixed-wing aircraft and digital cameras, Congress balked and yanked the Park Service out of the counting game altogether.

The folly of that decision became clear last fall when a coalition of antiwar activists staged their first Iraq-related demonstration on the Mall. As with last Saturday's event, the unofficial consensus among police and the media put attendance in the tens of thousands. And that's probably where it would have ended if not for some glaring mistakes by two prominent news organizations. On October 26, 2002, the evening of the protest, National Public Radio (NPR) correspondent Nancy Marshall, reporting from the White House, said on "All Things Considered" that "fewer than ten thousand" people had shown up. The following day, *The New York Times* cited a figure in the "thousands" and explained that "fewer people attended than organizers had said they hoped for." Within hours, angry antiwar activists began firing off hundreds of e-mails to the offending outlets. Three days later, NPR ran a correction, and the *Times* ran what the trade publication *Editor & Publisher* dubbed a "make-up" article. The article led with the organizers' claim that the protest had been the largest since the Vietnam era and bumped its attendance estimate to the 100,000 to 200,000 range. Lest anyone miss the point, the headline trumpeted, "RALLY IN WASHINGTON IS SAID TO INVIGORATE THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT."

The lesson was obvious. Absent reliable numbers, the media can't make reasonable judgments about the significance of a single demonstration, much less the movement it claims to represent. As *Washington Post* Metro editor Bob Barnes told the *American Journalism Review* in December, the decision about how prominently to cover a rally is "mostly based on what the turnout is." But, of course, objective, credible turnout estimates no longer exist—which leaves publications like the *Post* flying blind and, as a result, far more subject to activist pressure.

Just after Congress put the kibosh on head-counting in 1996, one Park Police official acknowledged to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* that the decision had sparked much debate within the agency—between p.r. officers who felt reporters had a right to the information and counting officials who

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didn't want the hassle. But in the end it was neither here nor there, the official concluded. "It won't be too long before they tell us to start counting again," he blithely told the paper. If only. ■

White House Watch

Stage Left

By Ryan Lizza

There is a weird respect among Washington journalists for presidential candidates who come before their most loyal supporters and insult them. In 1992, candidate Bill Clinton spoke before a black audience at a meeting of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. Rapper Sister Souljah, who had spoken to the group the evening before, had recently told *The Washington Post* that blacks would be justified in killing whites. Clinton criticized her for those comments, angering his audience and insulting Jackson. The move cemented Clinton's reputation as a centrist Democrat who was not held hostage to his party's interest groups. The media cheered, and the phrase "Sister Souljah moment" was born. In subsequent campaigns, George W. Bush won praise when he criticized House Republicans for trying to "balance their budget on the backs of the poor," while pundits swooned for John McCain when he said his party was bought and paid for by corporate special interests.

So when the six Democratic presidential candidates spoke before a core Democratic interest group, NARAL Pro-Choice America, Tuesday night, one question that hung in the air of the Omni Shoreham ballroom was, which Democrat would "Sister Souljah" NARAL? The answer was nobody. Prior to the event there was some whispering that Dick Gephardt might try to burnish his general election bona fides by criticizing partial-birth abortion, but it didn't happen. As an aide to one candidate explained, the NARAL event was "box-checking." There remains an iron triangle of Democratic constituencies—blacks, labor, pro-choice women—whom every candidate must appease during the primaries. Tuesday night, the six Democrats dutifully checked the abortion box.

John Edwards seems to go through cycles of exceedingly high expectations and intense media buzz punctuated by disappointing public performances that leave one wondering, "What is all the fuss about?" Last May, for example, a crescendo of Edwards hype came crashing down after a less than impressive encounter with Tim Russert on "Meet the Press."

Since then, the rollout of the Edwards campaign has again been masterful. Almost every Bush official I have ever asked has told me that Edwards is the Democrat the White House fears the most. Democratic operatives are flocking to his campaign. Expressing a sentiment apparently common among young Democratic staffers, an unemployed press secretary for a losing Democratic Senate candidate recently told me that Howard Dean's people keep leaving messages for her—but she's holding out for a spot on the Edwards campaign. Jennifer Palmieri, the smart and savvy press secretary for the Democratic National Committee, just signed on as Edwards's spokeswoman. And the senator's recent Sunday interview with George Stephanopoulos was well-received, suggesting that he'd honed his TV style since the "Meet the Press" fiasco.

But Edwards's NARAL speech was another unexpected dud. Edwards is still better at retail politics than he is at wholesale politics. The charm he exudes in small groups rarely comes across before large audiences. The second line of his speech—"When I was in law school, my friends and I did talk about *Roe* v. *Wade* ... unlike some people we know"—was supposed to be a joke. Nobody laughed. Before Edwards spoke, Kate Michelman, NARAL's president, stepped on one of his best lines, quoting Justice Harry Blackmun's warning that "a chill wind blows" for abortion rights. "That wind is blowing at gale force," she added. Edwards quoted the same Blackmun line and warned, "The chill wind blows even harder now." But, worst of all, Edwards had the ill fortune of being followed by Al Sharpton, who was funny, served up a freezer full of ideological red meat, and left the podium to cheers from an audience packed with wealthy white women. By the time Sharpton was done, the only thing I remembered about Edwards's remarks was that he is now claiming to be the champion of "ordinary people" rather than "regular people."

Joe Lieberman's speech was short and mono-thematic. Here it is in digest form: "We value women's health. ... Those are our values. ... American values. ... Constitutional values. ... Constitutional and American values. ... Neither side has a monopoly of values ... an American value ... an American value ... an American value. ... I am pro-values." Lieberman hasn't figured out how to talk about values without simply repeating the word over and over again, but putting abortion in this context is part of his experiment to run as a centrist who refuses to cede the "values" issue to Republicans while simultaneously locking up the support of key liberal constituencies. He has been aggressively courting African Americans and last week buried for good the reservations he once expressed about affirmative action. He followed the same script this week, assuring the fiercely secular pro-choice movement—a group that could be suspicious of his religiosity—of his unflinching support for abortion rights. "There are probably going to be many issues that we disagree on," he said of the Democratic field, "but not this one."

The candidate who most needed to reassure NARAL, though, was Gephardt. For his first decade in the House, Gephardt was staunchly pro-life. Of the four contenders with a congressional voting record, Gephardt is the only one without a 100 percent rating from NARAL over the last few years, having voted for a partial-birth abortion ban and for legisla-

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tion banning emergency contraception for minors at school health centers. So Gephardt had the unpleasant task of explaining exactly how he came to see the light on the issue of abortion—without reinforcing his reputation as a politician who has been on every side of every issue. (Even as Lieberman was being whacked this week for retreating on affirmative action, few noticed that Gephardt had abruptly reversed himself on taxes: The man who refused to talk about the Bush tax cut in 2002 now wants to roll it back to pay for national health insurance.) Gephardt's fickle reputation isn't new. As one rival campaign reminded me this week, Michael Dukakis beat Gephardt in 1988 by running a TV ad about Gephardt's reversals that showed acrobats doing flips.

For a politician who is known for being emotionally restrained, or even inert, Gephardt gave a deeply personal and eloquent speech about his journey from young pro-life Baptist to seasoned pro-choice presidential candidate. He was insistent that he had endured a long personal struggle with his conscience over this issue. "The first realization was that there is no balance to be found between incest and responsibility or between love and assault," he said. And, while Gephardt didn't have a Sister Souljah moment on partial-birth abortion, to his credit he didn't apologize for his record on the subject either. Of course, in terms of general election politics, a pro-choice candidate who talks about abortion in the language of personal conscience and who parts company with the pro-choice movement on partial birth has pretty much the ideal political profile. "The public wants politicians to say they support choice but with limits," says Democratic strategist Donna Brazile. Still, when Gephardt proclaimed that he cast his first pro-choice vote in 1986, it was hard not to remember that that was exactly the moment he was preparing for his first presidential run.

WHILE MOST OF the candidates wrapped their pro-choice beliefs in the soft glow of moral language and studiously ignored the most difficult issues of abortion policy, Dean did the opposite. His style is to grab the political live wire that everyone else is terrified of touching. And so Dean took partial-birth abortion, NARAL's most controversial and difficult-to-defend position, and made it the centerpiece of his speech, insisting that the term itself was an artifice manufactured by the right. "This is an issue about nothing," he proclaimed to the most boisterous applause of the evening. He then moved on to the next most divisive issue: parental notification. One of his twelve-year-old patients became pregnant after she was raped by her father, the Vermont physician said. "You explain that to the American people who think that parental notification is a good idea."

The Dean campaign has been going through cycles that are the opposite of the Edwards campaign: Long periods where everyone forgets about him are followed by bursts of great publicity and hype. He's on the cusp of another one of those surges. All recent reports from Iowa and New Hampshire say that he is electrifying the party faithful. His campaign has attracted some of the die-hard Democrats that toiled for Bill Bradley in 2000. Eric Hauser, Bradley's former press secretary, has offered to help Dean, and Rick Ridder, a senior adviser to Bradley, is now Dean's campaign manager. It's the same at the grassroots level. One top Democratic strategist notes that the "shock troops of New Hampshire" that worked on the ground for Bradley are now working for Dean. On Tuesday night, Dean had another little weapon in tow: Senator Jim Jeffords, a potentially handy sidekick for winning independents in New Hampshire. "He's my man," an excited Jeffords exclaimed.

Just as Dean is inheriting the Bradley machine, John Kerry is inheriting the Al Gore operation. "They have the Gore staff of 2004," says Brazile, who, as Gore's campaign manager, ought to know. Gore veterans Jill Alper, Chris Lehane, and Michael Whouley are all on board with Kerry now. Just as Dean is the scrappy anti-establishment candidate, Kerry is emerging as the candidate of the Democratic establishment. When Gore decided not to run, a Kerry aide argued that it would hurt Dean the most because Dean needed an establishment foil to run against. Kerry is becoming that foil.

Like Gore in 2000, Kerry has the best campaign organization. Indeed, he seems to have started building it as soon as Gore passed him over as a running mate in favor of Lieberman. At the 2000 Democratic convention, Kerry was already meeting with delegates from Iowa, Florida, and New Hampshire. Kerry is using his institutional muscle to build methodical support among the Democratic base of blacks, labor, and women—just as Gore did. His speech reinforced all of this. Only the candidate of the establishment would quote from a *New York Times* editorial. Next to Edwards's speech, Kerry's was the least memorable of the evening. It was a serviceable restatement of Kerry's commitment to all the issues NARAL cares about. There was even a sort of checklist at the end of it: "No overturning *Roe* v. *Wade*. No packing of the courts with judges hostile to choice. No denial of choice to poor women. No outlawing of a procedure necessary to save a woman's life or physical health. No more cutbacks on population-control efforts around the world." Kerry probably had the least need to impress this audience. His first Senate speech in 1985 was about abortion rights, and he's been a reliable ally to groups like NARAL ever since.

Indeed, if there is one candidate who might really benefit from a Sister Souljah moment, it's Kerry. "Kerry's in danger of being the pander-bear of the race," says an adviser to a rival campaign. Then again, what nobody remembers about Clinton's famous speech is, well, how Clintonian it was. It took place in June 1992, long after the primaries were over and the Democratic base was firmly behind him. He was stuck in third place behind Ross Perot, who was dominating news coverage and stealing the mantle of the independent outsider. Clinton's aides were scrambling for an opportunity to change the momentum of the campaign. In other words, rather than a moment of principled candor, Sister Souljah was a calculated publicity stunt. Don't expect one anytime soon. It's still box-checking season. ■

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Why politicians love affirmative action.

Pol Tested

By JONATHAN CHAIT

IF YOU WATCHED President Bush announce his opposition to the University of Michigan's affirmative action program last week, you probably came away with the impression that the president's position is a highly unpopular one. Bush's political body language was entirely defensive—from his speech, in which he urged greater minority enrollment on campus; to his legal reasoning, in which he failed to address the central question of whether diversity was a compelling government interest; to the calculated leak that African American foreign policy adviser Condoleezza Rice had helped shape his position. Media coverage has been informed by the assumption that opposition to affirmative action is the province of the knuckle-dragging right. "The president's statement pleased many in his conservative base," reported *The New York Times*. "Bush's position could bolster him with his base of conservative voters," chimed *The Washington Post*, "and some aides said Bush's moderate rhetoric put him in the middle ground with most of the American public."

Bush's opposition to racial preferences, however, is anything but a fringe right-wing view. A new poll by *Newsweek* finds that 68 percent of Americans, including 56 percent of minorities, oppose preferences for blacks and oppose preferences for other groups even more. Other polls find the same thing. A 2001 survey by the *Post*, in conjunction with Harvard and the Kaiser Family Foundation—not exactly hotbeds of racial backlash—asked, "In order to give minorities more opportunity, do you believe race or ethnicity should be a factor" in job-hiring and college admissions. An astonishing 92 percent of respondents, including 86 percent of blacks and 88 percent of Hispanics, said no. The paradox of Bush's cringing opposition to racial preferences is that, among all his contested stances, it is the one in which he is most closely in sync with public opinion and his critics most out of step.

In fact, Republicans have grown terrified of taking on racial preferences just as public opposition to them has grown more demonstrable. Upon taking control of Congress in 1995, Republicans drew up a bill to prevent the federal government from using racial preferences in hiring and contracting, and it was widely thought that the issue would play a large role in the 1996 elections. But GOP presidential nominee Bob Dole, who co-sponsored the anti-preferences bill, decided against emphasizing the issue, and Republicans let his bill die a quiet death the following year. In 1996, though, California voters approved an initiative banning racial preferences. In 1998, Washington—also a liberal state—endorsed a similar proposition. And yet, despite these public repudiations, supporters of affirmative action have grown increasingly bold. Bill Clinton, even while supporting racial preferences, felt it necessary to declare his intention to "mend" them. Al Gore, by contrast, trumpeted his unequivocal support. (When, in the third presidential debate, Bush tried to change the subject from affirmative action to "affirmative access," Gore replied, "I don't know what affirmative access means. I do know what affirmative action means. I know the governor is against it, and I know I'm for it.") And, even as Bush sought to soften his opposition last week, Democrats bashed him unreservedly. Senator John Kerry typically accused Bush of "using the rhetoric of diversity as a substitute for real progress on a civil rights agenda."

Critics of racial preferences insist that Republicans get in trouble on affirmative action *because* of their skittishness. "If you act ashamed and evasive, then it's a problem," asserts Roger Clegg of the conservative Center for Equal Opportunity. But if defying affirmative action were simply a matter of presentation, then surely as skilled a politician as Bush would have found the answer. The fact that politicians in both parties act as if affirmative action is a political winner suggests they must know something that doesn't show up in the opinion polls. And indeed, there are several reasons why racial preferences survive politically despite the fact that most voters oppose them.

FOR ONE THING, the people who care most about (and thus vote on) the issue of racial preferences tend to support it. In particular, preferences are popular among those who benefit from them the most—including Hispanics, whom Bush is aggressively trying to win over to the GOP. (The *Newsweek* poll, for instance, found that minorities are about 50 percent more likely than whites to support preferences.) Second, affirmative action has some powerful allies who help set the agenda in the most favorable light possible. Media coverage of racial issues tends to reflect the socially liberal views of the coastal elite. News coverage usually casts opposition to race preferences as an outgrowth of white backlash rather than as a genuinely held belief in the principle of pure color-blindness, regardless of its real-world consequences. A *New York Times* headline from earlier this month captures the flavor of the news coverage: "AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FACES A NEW WAVE OF ANGER."

Corporate America, too, has embraced affirmative action. In 1997, conservatives in Houston won approval to place on the ballot an initiative that read, "The city of Houston shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin in the operation of public employment and public contracting." But Houston Mayor Bob Lanier, a wealthy white contractor, rallied the city's business elite in opposition. Lanier successfully changed the ballot's wording to read, "Shall the charter of the city of Houston be amended to end the use of affirmative action for women and minorities in the operation of city of Houston employment and contracting, including ending the current program and similar pro-

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grams in the future?" Similarly, twenty Fortune 500 companies banded together to file an amicus brief supporting Michigan's affirmative action program. "*Amici* corporations have devoted substantial financial and human resources to create and maintain such a [diverse] workforce," the brief explained. "These extensive efforts are part of the very fabric of *amici*'s corporate cultures, are implemented and overseen by senior managers, and are supported at the highest levels."

The main reason, though, is that the substance of racial preferences matters less than the symbolism. In this, the politics of affirmative action resemble the politics of gun control. Most actual gun measures concern egregious cases, such as assault weapons, where support runs so wide that even gun owners support a ban. Yet Democrats have found that even proposing such modest steps hurts them at the polls. Even in cases where voters support the specific regulation, it gets translated—with the help of the National Rifle Association's (NRA) deep pockets—into a generalized support for gun control, which rural and Southern voters in turn interpret as a sign of disrespect for their values. A CBS News/*New York Times* poll from May 2000 nicely illustrates the paradox. Voters overwhelmingly endorsed the specific gun-control measures favored by Al Gore: 67 percent of respondents supported an assault-weapon ban, and 84 percent supported mandatory child-safety locks. But, when asked more broadly, "Who do you agree with more on the issue of gun control?" a slim majority chose Bush. Leading up to the election, according to labor officials, union members toted around leaflets reading, "Defend your guns, defeat Al Gore." And, in the same debate where he hammered Bush for waffling on affirmative action, Gore passed up a chance to attack Bush over his ties to the NRA. (A questioner in the audience had mentioned that NRA First Vice President Kayne Robinson had said that, if Bush was elected, the group would "work right out of [the Oval] Office.") After the election, many Democrats concluded that guns had cost them more than any issue. "We lost a number of voters who on almost every other issue realized they'd be better off with Al Gore," Joe Lieberman told *USA Today* in 2001. "They were anxious . . . about what would happen if Al was elected." Democrats now so fear gun control that they probably couldn't muster a majority to ban private ownership of tactical nuclear weapons.

The same dynamic seems to apply to racial preferences. People may disagree with them in theory. But, when a Republican criticizes them, the specifics of the critique get lost. Because Republicans are widely considered suspect on race—in the same way Democrats are considered suspect on rural "values"—all that comes across is that a conservative is attempting to dismantle civil rights laws. Seen in this light, Bush did exactly the right thing politically in the University of Michigan case. He kept his (popular) stand on the policy specifics but changed the symbolism—for example, by stressing his belief in diversity and having Rice and Colin Powell go out to make pro-affirmative action statements—such that people wouldn't think the administration was anti-civil rights. Cynical, yes. But evidently that's what Americans want. ■

Seoul Dispatch

Honor Guard

By Eric Weiner

I had an illuminating conversation with a South Korean woman the other day. She is very worried, she explained, about a dangerous nation armed with nuclear weapons and intent on stirring up trouble. The leader of this nation, she said, won't heed the call of the international community. "Yes," I replied, "everyone is concerned about North Korea." "No, no," she replied, "not North Korea. I'm talking about the United States."

While world attention is focused on North Korea's nuclear shenanigans, another Korean crisis has erupted. One American diplomat describes it as "the most tense and difficult time" he has experienced in 33 years of dealing with South Korea. The *Chosun Ilbo*, a South Korean daily, has declared that "United States–Korea relations are at the worst point in their history." Why have relations soured so dramatically? Because many in Washington have failed to recognize that South Korea is now a world-class economic power and a robust democracy—in other words, a mature nation demanding to be treated like an equal, not the pliable client the United States often views it as.

To understand the current rift between Washington and Seoul, put down the front page of a newspaper and pick up the sports page. Look up one name in particular: Kim Dong Sung. Haven't heard of him? The South Koreans have. Kim Dong Sung is the South Korean short-track speed skater who was disqualified from the Salt Lake City Olympics for interfering with another competitor. The gold medal went to an American instead, Apolo Anton Ohno, and the South Korean public, which follows short-track speed skating obsessively, was furious. The South Korean Olympic delegation filed a protest with the International Skating Union, and Ohno received thousands of threatening e-mails from angry South Koreans.

What does speed skating have to do with the strategic alliance between the United States and South Korea? Everything. South Korea is a nation coming into its own. After decades of military rule, stable democracy has finally taken root here. South Korea bounced back from the 1997 Asian financial crisis faster and further than any other country in the region. Its economy is now humming along, growing by a brisk 6 percent per year. South Korea is the most wired nation in the world. More than half of all homes have broadband Internet access, and a recent survey by a local newspaper showed that 70 percent of South Koreans in their twenties and thirties surf the Internet on a daily basis. Large

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South Korean companies, such as Hyundai and Samsung, have become multinational conglomerates, exporting all over the world.

For South Koreans, success in speed skating and other sports serves as a vindication of their rightful place in the world. South Korea co-hosted last year's World Cup and walked away with a surprise fourth-place finish. "That was an incredibly big event for us," Douglas Shin, a Korean-American who divides his time between Washington and Seoul, told me. "Soccer here is equated with national strength, and everybody seems to believe that we are now the fourth most powerful nation in the world."

Younger South Koreans in particular exhibit this heightened nationalism. Exit polls after December's presidential election, won by Roh Moo Hyun, a former human rights lawyer who ran a campaign infused with nationalism and anti-Americanism, indicated that Roh was trailing his opponent until approximately 1 p.m., when young voters began to line up at the polls, and he then took the lead.

Koreans, in other words, are in an assertive frame of mind—in no mood to take orders from the United States. But the Olympic skating fiasco left many people here feeling that the United States still doesn't treat them with respect. And the Bush administration has compounded the resentment Koreans feel over American condescension. In March 2001, South Korean President Kim Dae Jung visited Washington, eager to convince President Bush of the wisdom of his "sunshine policy" toward the North, which called for engaging Pyongyang. Instead, Bush railed against the North as Kim Dae Jung stood silently by his side, essentially being told what to do.

President Bush's decision to include North Korea in the axis of evil further rankled South Koreans. South Korea and the United States view the Stalinist North through two different lenses. Americans see North Korea as a nation of oddballs. South Koreans also find the North Koreans weird but are hesitant to say so out loud because they have to live with them. It's the difference between someone else's crazy cousin and *your* crazy cousin. Kim Dae Jung's sunshine policy was especially popular with South Koreans in their twenties and thirties, men and women too young to remember the Korean War. A recent survey of South Korean high school and college students conducted by a government ministry found that 90 percent would welcome a North Korean as their next-door neighbor.

Many South Koreans see the dispute on the Korean peninsula as a family affair and the United States as the nosy outsider who keeps interfering. Yet, after the North Korean nuclear crisis erupted last October, the Bush administration did not actively seek the South's guidance. South Korean officials complain to reporters that the Bush administration plowed ahead with its North Korea strategies for months without heeding the advice of officials in Seoul, who were suggesting that Washington initiate a dialogue with Pyongyang, a view the United States now seems to have reluctantly accepted.

PART OF THE problem is that, despite South Korea's development into a democracy and an economic power, American policymakers are stuck with an outdated image of the South as the quaint, backward nation portrayed in the TV show "M*A*S*H." Jeffrey Jones, former president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Korea, recalls a conversation with a U.S. representative who asked, "How are the peasants in South Korea doing?" Jones, a fluent Korean speaker, concluded that when it comes to South Korea most American officials are "ridiculously condescending and uninformed."

Add to this volatile mix the death of two South Korean schoolgirls, crushed to death under the wheels of a U.S. Army vehicle last June. By all accounts, this was a horrible accident—"a world-class tragedy," in the words of one American diplomat. Yet President Bush waited months before apologizing for the incident and then did so indirectly, through the American ambassador to Seoul. By contrast, when an American submarine collided with a Japanese fishing trawler off the coast of Hawaii in 2001, killing nine Japanese, Bush phoned Japan's prime minister to apologize and even led a moment of silence for the dead.

WHEN A U.S. military tribunal found the servicemen not guilty of negligent homicide in South Korea, a firestorm of anti-American protests ensued, which helped Roh get elected. Yet today's anti-American movement is different from any such past movements in South Korea. It's much broader, attracting housewives and software engineers in addition to the scruffy college students who always have been reliable anti-American firebrands. And, in a sense, it's as much pro-Korean. South Koreans don't want to kill Americans. They don't even want the American troops to leave. A poll last month conducted by the South Korean branch of Gallup found that only 32 percent of South Koreans support a troop with-

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

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drawal. They just want some respect: Protesters constantly call for a more "mature and equal relationship" with Washington, a phrase they repeat like a mantra.

What does that mean? For starters, they say, revising the legal status of the 37,000 American troops based in South Korea. South Koreans complain that the American troops are above local law. That's true in Japan as well; the Status of Forces Agreements in both countries are virtually identical. But in Japan the American troops are practically invisible, unless you happen to live in Okinawa, an island in the far south of the Japanese archipelago where more than half of the American forces are based. In South Korea, the troops' sprawling base sits smack in the middle of Seoul, hoarding 630 acres of prime real estate in a massive and growing city and serving as a daily reminder to South Koreans that they are incapable of defending themselves. Many South Koreans say that making American troops punishable under South Korean law, and even possibly pulling some troops out of South Korea while maintaining America's military presence in other parts of the Pacific, would be a start. They also want Washington to treat Seoul as an equal partner in resolving problems with Pyongyang.

The United States is beginning to recognize that the forces for change in South Korea have acquired an unstoppable momentum. With little fanfare last month at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his South Korean counterpart Lee Jun agreed to review the entire U.S.–South Korean military alliance, a review that might result in a scaling back of America's troop presence in the South. America's pullout from the Philippines in the early '90s might serve as a model. At that time, anti-American sentiment ran high in the Philippines. Ten years later, facing an Islamic insurgency, the Philippines invited American troops back. ■

Beijing Dispatch

Far East

By Jasper Becker

In Crawford, Texas, last October and on the phone this month, Chinese President Jiang Zemin confidently promised his new friend President George W. Bush that he would do his utmost to help solve the North Korea problem. Speaking after the Crawford summit, Jiang told reporters, "China has all along been a supporter of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. ... [W]e will continue to consult on this issue and work together to ensure a peaceful resolution." In return, Bush has thanked Jiang effusively, praising China for being "very helpful" and singling out Jiang for his "constructive leadership."

The reality is less sanguine. China has minimal influence with Pyongyang, which has distrusted Beijing for years. Despite this, China has been milking the North Korea issue for some time to show the United States it can be an upstanding member of the international community, and China has been earning a rich reward for doing very little regarding Pyongyang.

Despite historical links, enmity between Beijing and Pyongyang runs deep. China may have sent one million soldiers to rescue North Korea from defeat after it invaded the South in 1950, but relations have been poor, if not actively hostile, for most of the last 35 years. First came angry name-calling during the Cultural Revolution, when China's Red Guards attacked the former North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung for living too extravagant a lifestyle.

When Deng Xiaoping came to power in China in 1978, the relationship soured further. Fresh from winning a mandate to demolish Maoism, Deng arrived on a state visit to Pyongyang in September 1978 and could not help expressing revulsion at the absurdity of Kim Il Sung's personality cult. Like all other visitors, Deng was brought to pay his respects to the statue of "eternal president" Kim Il Sung. China's diminutive leader looked up at the 70-foot statue and noticed it was covered from head to toe in hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of gold. He complained to his hosts that they had squandered massive amounts of Chinese aid by building the monument and now had the nerve to demand more money. Later, Deng refused to grant future aid and demanded that the North reform its economy.

The statue incident triggered a serious rift not only with Kim Il Sung but also with the eternal president's eldest son, Kim Jong Il, who was busy assuring his eventual accession to his father's throne through flattery, erecting ever more grandiose monuments to his father. Even before Deng's slight, Kim Jong Il had few natural ties to China. While Kim Il Sung, who was educated in Manchuria, spoke Chinese and had even joined the Chinese Communist Party, Kim Jong Il only came to China for the first time in 1983 on a brief visit.

Accordingly, when he first began assuming power in 1980, taking over most day-to-day duties from his father, Kim Jong Il bridled at Beijing's suggestion that he deviate from his father's Stalinist policies. Instead, he plunged the country into a half-baked scheme to increase grain production by building huge seawalls to turn tidal flats into fields. Throughout the '80s, in fact, Kim Jong Il allegedly encouraged anti-Chinese feelings among the North Korean public and purged his party of anyone with strong links to China. In response, the Chinese began demanding hard currency for exports.

While China basked in record harvests by beginning to privatize agriculture, Kim Jong Il's promises to increase grain production became a nightmare. Grain harvests fell by half, and by the mid-'90s North Korea was not only broke but also

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starving. Not surprisingly, China became more and more irritated by the North's continuing demands when it could have used reforms to boost agricultural yields. Chinese schools and leaders began talking less and less about Chinese ties to the North or about the Korean War.

In response, North Korea began an absurd effort to expunge all traces of Chinese influence from Korean history. Chinese characters were no longer used, as they are in South Korea, to supplement the alphabet. When I visited the North in 1986, museum exhibits about the Korean War made no mention of Chinese involvement whatsoever. Students in the North complained to me about being insulted by China. Relations became even more frigid after Beijing established diplomatic links with South Korea in 1992 without insisting that Washington simultaneously recognize the North. In the eyes of the North, this was betrayal of the worst kind.

By the mid-'90s, China and North Korea were still putting out propaganda saying the two were as close as "lips and teeth," yet Beijing's influence over Pyongyang had dwindled to almost nothing. Occasionally, China's actions made a difference. In 1994, China's decision to cut off grain exports to the North helped force Pyongyang to swallow its pride and deal with the international community by appealing to the United Nations for emergency food aid.

Yet the grain decision was an exception. Beijing's leaders realize that Kim Jong Il, who understands little of how economies function, has mismanaged his country's economy since he was effectively put in charge of it in 1980. Were Kim Jong Il to reform, China's northeast, one of the poorer areas of the country, would greatly profit from increased rail and road links. Yet China's lack of influence shows in its continuing failure to persuade the North to copy China's economic reforms, which, if implemented, might raise food production and possibly even bring in foreign investment. What's more, China played only a minimal role in resolving the 1994 nuclear crisis, which was dominated by U.S.–North Korea meetings, and in 1998 it played a similarly small part in defusing the crisis that erupted after North Korea shot a missile over the Japanese islands, doing little more than using its state media to criticize U.S. intervention in Northeast Asia.

Frustrated by the lack of economic change, China has also in recent years suspended flights to Pyongyang, cut off commercial lines of credit, closed down border crossings, and even restricted goods from entering the North. Chinese companies have pulled out of the Rajin-Sonbong free-trade zone, an early '90s scheme to lure foreign capital to an area of North Korea along the Chinese border. China even helped scuttle Kim Jong Il's most recent project, a special economic zone similar to Rajin-Sonbong, by arresting a Dutch-Chinese businessman Kim Jong Il had charged with running the zone. China was more hesitant to send food aid to the North in 2002 and, until recently, ignored the hundreds of thousands of North Korean refugees fleeing into China, even though Pyongyang pressured Beijing to round up the refugees and deport them.

Despite its lack of influence, Beijing has portrayed itself to the United States as a crucial go-between to North Korea. In response, the Western press has begun lionizing Beijing, running headlines such as *The Philadelphia Inquirer*'s on October 26, 2002, "JIANG AGREES TO HELP DISARM NORTH KOREA." Leading China academics, such as Kenneth Lieberthal, have announced that China could be on the verge of becoming a friend to America. In a *New York Times* article last October, Lieberthal asked in the headline, "HAS CHINA BECOME AN ALLY?"

But it is unlikely China will be able to help sway Kim Jong Il. In fact, many academics familiar with China and North Korea, such as Scott Snyder of the Asia Foundation in Seoul, say China is as badly informed about what goes on in the secretive North as anyone else and that the prospects of Jiang Zemin or other Chinese leaders directly influencing Kim Jong Il's policies seem remote. Jiang has had several meetings with Kim Jong Il about the nuclearization of the peninsula, but all evidence suggests that Kim Jong Il has paid no heed at all. After all, though China has been saying for a decade that it desires a nuclear-free North Korea and has put pressure on Pyongyang not to go forward with nuclear development, the North has continued with a covert nuclear weapons program.

In fact, in recent years, China has drawn closer to Seoul than to Pyongyang. Today, China and South Korea conduct over $100 billion in two-way trade annually, and South Korea is now one of the largest investors in China. These days, the Chinese joke is that North Korea is the official wife, but it is the concubine, South Korea, which is loved. Unfortunately for the Bush administration's efforts at multilateral diplomacy, Pyongyang feels just about as warmly about Beijing. ■

A liberal 'hoax' turns out to be true.

Trick Question

By MICHAEL FUMENTO

IT'S BOTH RIGHT-WING and vast, but it's not a conspiracy. Actually, it's more of an anti-conspiracy. The subject is Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), closely related ailments (henceforth referred to in this article simply as ADHD). Rush Limbaugh declares it "may all be a hoax." Francis Fukuyama devotes much of one chapter in his latest book, *Our Posthuman Future*, to attacking Ritalin, the top-selling drug used to treat ADHD. Columnist Thomas Sowell writes, "The motto used to be: 'Boys will be boys.'

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Today, the motto seems to be: 'Boys will be medicated.'" And Phyllis Schlafly explains, "The old excuse of 'my dog ate my homework' has been replaced by 'I got an ADHD diagnosis.'" A March 2002 article in *The Weekly Standard* summed up the conservative line on ADHD with this rhetorical question: "Are we really prepared to redefine childhood as an ailment, and medicate it until it goes away?"

Many conservative writers, myself included, have criticized the growing tendency to pathologize every undesirable behavior—especially where children are concerned. But, when it comes to ADHD, this skepticism is misplaced. As even a cursory examination of the existing literature or, for that matter, simply talking to the parents and teachers of children with ADHD reveals, the condition is real, and it is treatable. And, if you don't believe me, you can ask conservatives who've come face to face with it themselves.

Myth: ADHD isn't a real disorder.

The most common argument against ADHD on the right is also the simplest: It doesn't exist. Conservative columnist Jonah Goldberg thus reduces ADHD to "ants in the pants." Sowell equates it with "being bored and restless." Fukuyama protests, "No one has been able to identify a cause of ADD/ADHD. It is a pathology recognized only by its symptoms." And a conservative columnist approvingly quotes Thomas Armstrong, Ritalin opponent and author, when he declares, "ADD is a disorder that cannot be authoritatively identified in the same way as polio, heart disease or other legitimate illnesses."

The Armstrong and Fukuyama observations are as correct as they are worthless. "Half of all medical disorders are diagnosed without benefit of a lab procedure," notes Dr. Russell Barkley, professor of psychology at the College of Health Professionals at the Medical University of South Carolina. "Where are the lab tests for headaches and multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's?" he asks. "Such a standard would virtually eliminate all mental disorders."

Often the best diagnostic test for an ailment is how it responds to treatment. And, by that standard, it doesn't get much more real than ADHD. The beneficial effects of administering stimulants to treat the disorder were first reported in 1937. And today medication for the disorder is reported to be 75 to 90 percent successful. "In our trials it was close to ninety percent," says Dr. Judith Rapoport, director of the National Institute of Mental Health's Child Psychiatry Branch, who has published about 100 papers on ADHD. "This means there was a significant difference in the children's ability to function in the classroom or at home."

Additionally, epidemiological evidence indicates that ADHD has a powerful genetic component. University of Colorado researchers have found that a child whose identical twin has the disorder is between eleven and 18 times more likely to also have it than is a non-twin sibling. For these reasons, the American Psychiatric Association (APA), American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, the surgeon general's office, and other major medical bodies all acknowledge ADHD as both real and treatable.

Myth: ADHD is part of a feminist conspiracy to make little boys more like little girls.

Many conservatives observe that boys receive ADHD diagnoses in much higher numbers than girls and find in this evidence of a feminist conspiracy. (This, despite the fact that genetic diseases are often heavily weighted more toward one gender or the other.) Sowell refers to "a growing tendency to treat boyhood as a pathological condition that requires a new three R's—repression, re-education and Ritalin." Fukuyama claims Prozac is being used to give women "more of the alpha-male feeling," while Ritalin is making boys act more like girls. "Together, the two sexes are gently nudged toward that androgynous median personality ... that is the current politically correct outcome in American society." George Will, while acknowledging that Ritalin can be helpful, nonetheless writes of the "androgyny agenda" of "drugging children because they are behaving like children, especially boy children." Anti-Ritalin conservatives frequently invoke Christina Hoff Sommers's best-selling 2000 book, *The War Against Boys*. You'd never know that the drug isn't mentioned in her book—or why.

"Originally I was going to have a chapter on it," Sommers tells me. "It seemed to fit the thesis." What stopped her was both her survey of the medical literature and her own empirical findings. Of one child she personally came to know she says, "He was utterly miserable, as was everybody around him. The drugs saved his life."

Myth: ADHD is part of the public school system's efforts to warehouse kids rather than to discipline and teach them.

"No doubt life is easier for teachers when everyone sits around quietly," writes Sowell. Use of ADHD drugs is "in the school's interest to deal with behavioral and discipline problems [because] it's so easy to use Ritalin to make kids compliant: to get them to sit down, shut up, and do what they're told," declares Schlafly. The word "zombies" to describe children under the effects of Ritalin is tossed around more than in a B-grade voodoo movie.

Kerri Houston, national field director for the American Conservative Union and the mother of two ADHD children on medication, agrees with much of the criticism of public schools. "But don't blame ADHD on crummy curricula and lazy teachers," she says. "If you've worked with these children, you know they have a serious neurological problem." In any case, Ritalin, when taken as prescribed, hardly stupefies children. To the extent the medicine works, it simply turns ADHD children into normal children. "ADHD is like having thirty televisions on at one time, and the medicine turns off twenty-

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nine so you can concentrate on the one," Houston describes. "This zombie stuff drives me nuts! My kids are both as lively and as fun as can be."

Myth: Parents who give their kids anti-ADHD drugs are merely doping up problem children.

Limbaugh calls ADHD "the perfect way to explain the inattention, incompetence, and inability of adults to control their kids." Addressing parents directly, he lectures, "It helped you mask your own failings by doping up your children to calm them down."

Such charges blast the parents of ADHD kids into high orbit. That includes my Hudson Institute colleague (and fellow conservative) Mona Charen, the mother of an eleven-year-old with the disorder. "I have two non-ADHD children, so it's not a matter of parenting technique," says Charen. "People without such children have no idea what it's like. I can tell the difference between boyish high spirits and pathological hyperactivity. ... These kids bounce off the walls. Their lives are chaos; their rooms are chaos. And nothing replaces the drugs."

Barkley and Rapoport say research backs her up. Randomized, controlled studies in both the United States and Sweden have tried combining medication with behavioral interventions and then dropped either one or the other. For those trying to go on without medicine, "the behavioral interventions maintained nothing," Barkley says. Rapoport concurs: "Unfortunately, behavior modification doesn't seem to help with ADHD." (Both doctors are quick to add that ADHD is often accompanied by other disorders that are treatable through behavior modification in tandem with medicine.)

Myth: Ritalin is "kiddie cocaine."

One of the paradoxes of conservative attacks on Ritalin is that the drug is alternately accused of turning children into brain-dead zombies and of making them Mach-speed cocaine junkies. Indeed, Ritalin is widely disparaged as "kiddie cocaine." Writers who have sought to lump the two drugs together include Schlafly, talk-show host and columnist Armstrong Williams, and others whom I hesitate to name because of my long-standing personal relationships with them.

Mary Eberstadt wrote the "authoritative" Ritalin-cocaine piece for the April 1999 issue of *Policy Review*, then owned by the Heritage Foundation. The article, "Why Ritalin Rules," employs the word "cocaine" no fewer than twelve times. Eberstadt quotes from a 1995 Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) background paper declaring methylphenidate, the active ingredient in Ritalin, "a central nervous system (CNS) stimulant [that] shares many of the pharmacological effects of amphetamine, methamphetamine, and cocaine." Further, it "produces behavioral, psychological, subjective, and reinforcing effects similar to those of d-amphetamine including increases in rating of euphoria, drug liking and activity, and decreases in sedation." Add to this the fact that the Controlled Substances Act lists it as a Schedule II drug, imposing on it the same tight prescription controls as morphine, and Ritalin starts to sound spooky indeed.

What Eberstadt fails to tell readers is that the DEA description concerns methylphenidate *abuse*. It's tautological to say abuse is harmful. According to the DEA, the drugs in question are comparable when "administered the same way at comparable doses." But ADHD stimulants, when taken as prescribed, are neither administered in the same way as cocaine nor at comparable doses. "What really counts," says Barkley, "is the speed with which the drugs enter and clear the brain. With cocaine, because it's snorted, this happens tremendously quickly, giving users the characteristic addictive high." (Ever seen anyone pop a cocaine tablet?) Further, he says, "There's no evidence anywhere in literature of [Ritalin's] addictiveness when taken as prescribed." As to the Schedule II listing, again this is because of the potential for it to fall into the hands of abusers, not because of its effects on persons for whom it is prescribed. Ritalin and the other anti-ADHD drugs, says Barkley, "are the safest drugs in all of psychiatry." (And they may be getting even safer: A new medicine just released called Strattera represents the first true non-stimulant ADHD treatment.)

Indeed, a study just released in the journal *Pediatrics* found that children who take Ritalin or other stimulants to control ADHD cut their risk of future substance abuse by 50 percent compared with untreated ADHD children. The lead author speculated that "by treating ADHD you're reducing the demoralization that accompanies this disorder, and you're improving the academic functioning and well-being of adolescents and young adults during the critical times when substance abuse starts."

Myth: Ritalin is overprescribed across the country.

Some call it "the Ritalin craze." In *The Weekly Standard*, Melana Zyla Vickers informs us that "Ritalin use has exploded," while Eberstadt writes that "Ritalin use more than doubled in the first half of the decade alone, [and] the number of schoolchildren taking the drug may now, by some estimates, be approaching the *4 million mark*."

A report in the January 2003 issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* did find a large increase in the use of ADHD medicines from 1987 to 1996, an increase that doesn't appear to be slowing. Yet nobody thinks it's a problem that routine screening for high blood pressure has produced a big increase in the use of hypertension medicine. "Today, children suffering from ADHD are simply less likely to slip through the cracks," says Dr. Sally Satel, a psychiatrist, AEI fellow, and author of *PC, M.D.: How Political Correctness Is Corrupting Medicine*.

Satel agrees that some community studies, by the standards laid down in the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, indicate that ADHD may often be over-diagnosed. On the other hand, she says, additional evidence shows that in some communities ADHD is *under*-diagnosed and *under*-treated. "I'm quite concerned with children who need the medication and aren't getting it," she says.

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There *are* tremendous disparities in the percentage of children taking ADHD drugs when comparing small geographical areas. Psychologist Gretchen LeFever, for example, has compared the number of prescriptions in mostly white Virginia Beach, Virginia, with other, more heavily African American areas in the southeastern part of the state. Conservatives have latched onto her higher numbers—20 percent of white fifth-grade boys in Virginia Beach are being treated for ADHD—as evidence that something is horribly wrong. But others, such as Barkley, worry about the lower numbers. According to LeFever's study, black children are only half as likely to get medication as white children. "Black people don't get the care of white people; children of well-off parents get far better care than those of poorer parents," says Barkley.

MYTH: STATES SHOULD PASS LAWS THAT RESTRICT SCHOOLS FROM RECOMMENDING RITALIN.

Conservative writers have expressed delight that several states, led by Connecticut, have passed or are considering laws ostensibly protecting students from schools that allegedly pass out Ritalin like candy. Representative Lenny Winkler, lead sponsor of the Connecticut measure, told *Reuters Health*, "If the diagnosis is made, and it's an appropriate diagnosis that Ritalin be used, that's fine. But I have also heard of many families approached by the school system [who are told] that their child cannot attend school if they're not put on Ritalin."

Two attorneys I interviewed who specialize in child-disability issues, including one from the liberal Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law in Washington, D.C., acknowledge that school personnel have in some cases stepped over the line. But legislation can go too far in the other direction by declaring, as Connecticut's law does, that "any school personnel [shall be prohibited] from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any child." The law appears to offer an exemption by declaring, "The provisions of this section shall not prohibit *school medical staff* from recommending that a child be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, or prohibit school personnel from consulting with such practitioner, with the consent of the parent or guardian of such child." [Emphasis added.] But of course many, if not most, schools have perhaps one nurse on regular "staff." That nurse will have limited contact with children in the classroom situations where ADHD is likely to be most evident. And, given the wording of the statute, a teacher who believed a student was suffering from ADHD would arguably be prohibited from referring that student to the nurse. Such ambiguity is sure to have a chilling effect on any form of intervention or recommendation by school personnel. Moreover, 20-year special-education veteran Sandra Rief said in an interview with the National Education Association that "recommending medical intervention for a student's behavior could lead to personal liability issues." Teachers, in other words, could be forced to choose between what they think is best for the health of their students and the possible risk of losing not only their jobs but their personal assets as well.

"Certainly it's not within the purview of a school to say kids can't attend if they don't take drugs," says Houston. "On the other hand, certainly teachers should be able to advise parents as to problems and potential solutions. . . . [T]hey may see things parents don't. My own son is an angel at home but was a demon at school."

If the real worry is "take the medicine or take a hike" ultimatums, legislation can be narrowly tailored to prevent them; broad-based gag orders, such as Connecticut's, are a solution that's worse than the problem.

THE CONSERVATIVE CASE FOR ADHD DRUGS.

There are kernels of truth to every conservative suspicion about ADHD. Who among us has not had lapses of attention? And isn't hyperactivity a normal condition of childhood when compared with deskbound adults? Certainly there *are* lazy teachers, warehousing schools, androgyny-pushing feminists, and far too many parents unwilling or unable to expend the time and effort to raise their children properly, even by their own standards. Where conservatives go wrong is in making ADHD a scapegoat for frustration over what we perceive as a breakdown in the order of society and family. In a column in *The Boston Herald*, Boston University Chancellor John Silber rails that Ritalin is "a classic example of a cheap fix: low-cost, simple and purely superficial."

Exactly. Like most headaches, ADHD is a neurological problem that can usually be successfully treated with a chemical. Those who recommend or prescribe ADHD medicines do not, as *The Weekly Standard* put it, see them as "discipline in pill-form." They see them as pills.

In fact, it can be argued that the use of those pills, far from being liable for or symptomatic of the Decline of the West, reflects and reinforces conservative values. For one thing, they increase personal responsibility by removing an excuse that children (and their parents) can fall back on to explain misbehavior and poor performance. "Too many psychologists and psychiatrists focus on allowing patients to justify to themselves their troubling behavior," says Satel. "But something like Ritalin actually encourages greater autonomy because you're treating a compulsion to behave in a certain way. Also, by treating ADHD, you remove an opportunity to explain away bad behavior."

Moreover, unlike liberals, who tend to downplay differences between the sexes, conservatives are inclined to believe that there are substantial physiological differences—differences such as boys' greater tendency to suffer ADHD. "Conservatives celebrate the physiological differences between boys and girls and eschew the radical-feminist notion that gender differences are created by societal pressures," says Houston regarding the fuss over the boy-girl disparity among ADHD diagnoses. "ADHD is no exception."

But, however compatible conservatism may be with taking ADHD seriously, the truth is that most conservatives remain skeptics. "I'm sure I would have been one of those smug conservatives saying it's a made-up disease," admits Charen, "if I hadn't found out the hard way." Here's hoping other conservatives find an easier route to accepting the truth. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

What Is Within

WHEN EMILE ZOLA published the dramatization of his novel *Thérèse Raquin* in 1873, he included a preface that is a landmark in the history of naturalism. In it he said that his intent was to show "the banality of everyday life behind the excruciating agonies of my chief protagonists." The Belgian filmmakers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne may never have read this preface (though it would be no surprise if they knew it), but in their films they have been progressing steadily toward Zolaesque naturalism.

Now in their fifties, these brothers spent many years making documentaries for Belgian and French television. In 1996 they made their first fiction feature, *La Promesse*, about a grubby youth in an industrial city and his encounter with the primal honor of an African woman, a film that is surely a quiet, hushed place in the memory of everyone who saw it. Working-class life was only to a degree the true subject. In their next feature, *Rosetta* (1999), the crush of that life had a larger part as a teenage girl struggled to remain uncrushed. Now comes **The Son** (New Yorker), in which the milieu—the workaday life of a carpenter who teaches carpentry—is the core. This shape seems pure Zola. Everyday working life, says the film, is where most of the world's drama takes place.

I saw *The Son* at the New York Film Festival last fall and have now seen it again, and both times I felt that I was in the presence of a work that is larger and more deeply roiling than we are usually prepared for in a film. Part of the enlarging, almost frightening ultimate effect of the film comes from the Zolaesque banalities with which it begins. First we hear a saw. (There is never any music.) Then come some hammering and other shop noises as we enter the world of Olivier, a skilled carpenter in his thirties, who is moving around a shop attending to the work of teenage boys. Most of the movement in this sequence—in almost all of the sequences—is shot with a hand-held camera, which to the Dardennes seems an adjunct of naturalism. Thus, in much of the beginning we are following Olivier, not accompanying him. We see his face sometimes, but as he moves around we see mostly the back of his head. Before the film is five minutes old, the hand-held camera weaves us into the patterns of Olivier's life. We get some idea of his skills and standards and also of his good feeling toward these boys. Very soon we learn that this is a government center; these boys are out of juvenile prisons and are being taught a useful trade.

We learn more. Olivier's ex-wife visits, tells him that she is re-marrying, and asks whether he has met anyone. No, he says. It seems that their divorce came about because of emotional shock: their very young son was murdered, and the blow somehow split this couple.

The film progresses. The saws continue to whine, the hammers to tap. Another sixteen-year-old boy, Francis, arrives after a five-year prison term. Soon Olivier realizes that this is the boy who killed his son. Olivier, who is not chatty in any case, does not tell Francis that he is the child's father. He isn't sure why he doesn't tell the boy or why he agrees to work with him. When his ex-wife discovers that he is working with their child's murderer, she faints in his arms. Then she asks him why he is doing this. He replies, with an aching, persistent bewilderment, "I don't know."

In the course of his daily work with Francis, Olivier asks the youth why he was sent to prison. For stealing a radio from a car, says Francis. But after he started the theft, he saw that there was a baby in the car who began to cry, and Francis had to silence him. Through this account, as through all their work together, Olivier reveals nothing by word or look. He just keeps working. When he is alone, however, unspoken questions tear at him.

Olivier asks Francis to accompany him one Sunday to a lumberyard that Olivier's brother owns. Other boys have made this trip: it is a chance to learn something about wood. In this deserted lumberyard, as the two of them select planks and load them on a trailer behind a pickup truck, Olivier tells Francis what he knows about the crime. Perhaps Olivier planned to tell him, perhaps not; their isolation here seems to make the facts burst forth. Francis panics. Fearing that Olivier will seek revenge in this lonely place, he scampers over the piles of planks. Olivier chases him, shouting after him that it will be all right. Francis breaks out of the yard into the woods. Olivier catches him and subdues him, at last with his hands around the boy's throat. He is in the same position that Francis was in with the baby. The shock of this fact stops Olivier—who did not mean to harm Francis anyway. He gets up. Because Olivier releases him, Francis is calmed. He goes back to the lumberyard with Olivier. They again load planks on the trailer. Working life continues. The film stops. It does not end. It stops.

I have sketched more details than usual because reticent hints could not do justice to this starkly sculptured story and because, as I found on my second viewing, prior knowledge can only enhance the power of the film. *The Son* does not depend on plot twists. The fulfillment is all, especially in the performances. Olivier is played by Olivier Gourmet, who was in the first two Dardenne films: as the boy's crafty, exploiting father in *La Promesse* and as the girl's boss in *Rosetta*. If there is such a person as a perfect Zola actor, it is Gourmet. He could not have a less distinguished face—doughy and bespectacled—but his physical force, his concentration, assure us that a manifold person is lurking within the (seeming) non-actor. When, for instance, he chases Francis around the lumberyard, the sheer physicality of his chase, seeking to reassure the boy, expresses what the man could not verbalize.

The more surprising performance comes from Morgan Marinne as Francis. The directors clearly led him to understand that Francis had prepared a state of mind for himself. He had stolen a radio, and, only incidentally, he had killed a baby. In any case he had "paid" (his word) with a five-year prison term. The directors also helped Marinne to deal with the shattering of Francis's state of mind when he finds that he is working with the baby's father. For the relatively inexperienced Marinne to have dealt so well with these subtleties required, besides good directing, a native quickness.

The press material for this film contains some notes made by the Dardenne brothers during the shooting. Such material is

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usually disposable, but these notes are germane. On November 23, 2001, they say that Olivier "is probably right when he responds, 'I don't know.' We don't know, either." The immensity of the forces that are in Olivier, previously unsuspected and now revealed, is precisely this film's subject. (Is that Tolstoy glimmering in the distance?) The ability to conceive a compact drama on this huge subject and to embody it as perfectly as they have done, added to what they have already accomplished, puts Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne among the premier film artists of our time.

A last quotation from their notes. "April 4, 2002. The film is called 'The Son.' It could have been called 'The Father.'" Yes. ■

Martin Filler on Architecture

Back to Babel

DANIEL BURNHAM'S legendary exhortation to "make no little plans" deserves to be trumped by even pithier architectural advice: "First, get the job." That was the barely suppressed subtext of the seven public presentations of designs for the World Trade Center site given in New York a week before Christmas. Despite the problematic aspects of all the proposals, it was a good day for the idea of architecture, if less so for the realities of urban planning. Not since the opening of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao five years earlier has a building project received such extensive media coverage, or so fully captured the public imagination, or provoked so much critical discourse, albeit for reasons entirely different from the purely aesthetic concerns of Gehry's pre-millennial masterpiece. It was thrilling to overhear the new projects being discussed by the general public all around town, just as it was to see the designs reproduced in color on the front pages of all three of the city's tabloids.

Never mind that the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) had been shamed into this second round of schemes after the pathetic series of proposals it unveiled in July were roundly denounced. That debacle in turn prompted the high-style beauty pageant paraded in *The New York Times Magazine* in September by the paper's architecture critic, who by acting as a patron as well as a commentator placed himself in the indefensible and untenable position of both judge and jury. The first round of utterly graceless and greedy LMDC offerings (which attempted to replace all eleven million square feet of lost commercial space) and the exhibitionistic *Times Magazine* chorus line forced the issue that the gravity of this commission deserved a higher level of architectural quality. About that, at least, there was unanimous agreement in all quarters.

As though taking dictation from the newspaper of record, a panel of establishment experts appointed by the LMDC (including Terence Riley of the Museum of Modern Art and Toshiko Mori of Harvard University) dutifully invited no fewer than six of the *Times* participants—Peter Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey, Steven Holl, Richard Meier, Frederick Schwartz, and Rafael Viñoly—to join in the subsequent charrette. The omission from their ranks of the formidable Zaha Hadid, a particular favorite of the *Times* critic, who included her among the anointed in his magazine manifesto, earned the LMDC a sharp rebuke from him. It was yet another flagrant conflict of interest that seemed not overly to trouble his paper's moral guardians. What would they say if their movie critics began sending script ideas to Harvey Weinstein and then writing about the results?

The live television and radio coverage of the December press conference, which was held in the recently restored Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, across the street from Ground Zero, allowed the general public a rare opportunity to witness how architects make their

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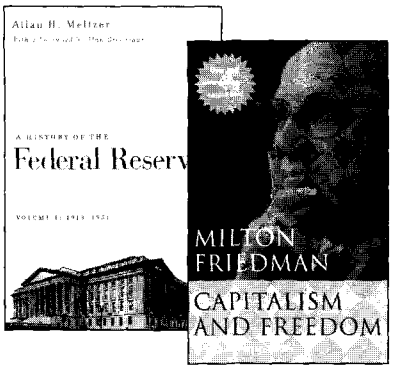

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pitch. (In fact, the firms had already given private presentations to the LMDC and other planning officials during the weeks leading up to the announcements.) An instructive—not to say highly revealing—experience it was, too, even for seasoned architectural observers, who savored the telling details that can subliminally influence a client's selection of an architect. There was a touch of comedy: here were some of the most self-important alpha males on the planet (only one of the day's dozen speakers was a woman) in the unaccustomed, imploring attitude of Fuller Brush men. To witness some of the leading architectural figures of the day in open contention was an even bigger treat. As Brian Lehrer of WNYC gleefully put it, the mano a mano event was "an architecture slam, a battle of the bands."

The day's first supplicant, the Berlin-based Daniel Libeskind, proved why, with so little built work to his credit, he has been getting so many major jobs lately. Libeskind's intense, theatrical proffer quickly cut to the emotional heart of the matter, beginning with his tale of arriving by ship in New York harbor as the son of Holocaust survivors, awed by the Statue of Liberty and the Manhattan skyline like generations of grateful immigrants before him. It was clear that he took the wanton destruction of the most salient features of that cityscape personally, and better than any of his peers he communicated the sense of loss and the urgent need for renewal that the tragedy of September 11 inspired. Not for him the rational reticence and the conservative tailoring of the cool architectural professional. And if in his manic intensity and head-to-toe hipster black he came across like Dieter in *Sprockets*, his heart was in the right place.

Libeskind's project is strongest of all in its memorial aspects. This is not surprising, because he tends to turn commissions into commemorative monuments whether he is asked to or not. The Jewish Museum in Berlin was meant to celebrate the culture of Germany's Jews, but Libeskind transformed it into a Holocaust memorial, just as he made his Imperial War Museum North near Manchester into an implicit military *Denkmal*. Libeskind is an entrepreneur of commemoration, a human Yahrzeit candle.

Though all the new Ground Zero proposals in one way or another demarcate the footprints of the Twin Towers, Libeskind's design is by far the most dramatic evocation of the disaster. It is easy to see why it has struck such a resonant chord among the victims' families. He wants the seventy-foot-deep pits and their rough slurry walls (the subterranean foundations that kept river and ground water out of the landfill site) to be preserved intact. This graphic reminder of the physical enormity of the towers' demise is very powerful, but it is not very practical: retaining the grave-like excavations will be difficult to do, not least because a vast amount of infrastructure must be restored to the site, not all of which can be rerouted around or submerged beneath the gaping holes, seven stories below street level.

Rising above it all would be a slender, crystalline 1,776-foot-tall greenhouse structure. (The numerological symbolism seemed tonally off, an immigrant's excess.) The spire would contain a vertical hanging garden with flora and fauna from around the world, introducing the ecological theme shared by several of the other architects and echoing former mayor Rudy Giuliani's call for "a soaring, beautiful memorial." But the rest of Libeskind's multi-building scheme seems quite sketchy, no doubt because of the great haste with which the designs had to be prepared in order to meet the LMDC's ridiculously tight deadline. (Then there was the insultingly chintzy $40,000 fee that the agency bestowed on each participant, scarcely lunch money in terms of the enormous outlay of time and labor involved. That pittance repulsed a number of heavy-duty players—Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown among them—who might have been tempted to submit had they not been turned off by having to go into debt to do so. You get what you pay for.)

In any event, Libeskind did not devote the same obsessive attention that he focused on the mnemonic components to the specifics of the site's more practical requirements. With all due respect to his serious artistic ambitions, there seems little likelihood that a project of this magnitude will be handed over to a late-blooming *Luftmensch*, however astute he may be as a cultural salesman and a prod to historical conscience.

Next at bat was Norman Foster. As could have been foreseen, Foster's scheme was technologically proficient, environmentally sensitive, sleekly finished, structurally logical, and more than a bit cold, a deficiency that he effectively countered with his persuasive presentation. Purporting with dubious theological accuracy that the triangle is a symbol common to all the world's religions, Foster demonstrated how that geometric shape formed the modular basis for his faceted design, which recalls the folded contours of a Noguchi paper lantern, ossified and magnified to truly monstrous proportions.

While our eyes saw two adjacent behemoths chillingly reminiscent of the lost towers but some forty stories taller, Foster

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suggestively described how the resurrected twins "kiss and touch and become one" at various points on their long way up to becoming the world's tallest buildings. His handling of the footprints would preserve them as memorial voids, though much more tidied up than Libeskind's raw ruins. Access to Foster's elegant minimalist spaces—a cross between Chase Manhattan Plaza and Yad Vashem—would be apportioned between the general public on one side and the victims' families on the other, a hierarchy that no doubt will be comforting to many of the mourners. But will that VIP-mourner status be held in perpetuity, and can it be bequeathed to future generations? When you are talking in terms of eternity, such petty questions arise.

With shameless sentimentality, Foster then led viewers through his scheme as seen through the eyes of a young child visiting his completed megastructure with her family, a clever ploy to humanize a most inhuman scheme. (He even specified that she was wearing an orange dress, perhaps like the little girl in red in *Schindler's List*.) On the observation deck atop one tower, the architect fantasized, "the little girl realizes, she says, that she can see forever. But also she is reminded by her parents, as she looks down into the void, that that is where they started their journey and where you cannot see any life." This calculating schmaltz brought to mind Thelma Ritter's undeceived wisecrack from *All About Eve*: "What a story! It's got everything except the bloodhounds nipping at her rear end."

By the end of Foster's maudlin but masterful spiel, it was clear that he was the man to beat, and that impression has not diminished in the weeks since the event. His big-time credentials are reassuring to real estate developers and civic officials alike. Among his more than one thousand commissions are such preposterously prestigious jobs as the Reichstag and the British Museum. His London-based firm commands a staff of six hundred that can provide virtually every architectural service in-house, unlike the makeshift cadres of architects and consultants cobbled together for this competition, in large part because few high-style practices possess the technical expertise for such a complex job. Foster and Partners' imposing Thames-side headquarters looks like the home office of the multinational corporation that it effectively is, not the arty boutique that it likes to pose as in the more rarefied circles of the architecture world.

But perhaps neither glossy image nor broad experience alone will win the day for Foster. Unlike the several schemes that suggest incremental construction as the market calls for it, his megaliths are meant to be built in one fell swoop. That there is nothing remotely approaching demand for multi-millions of square feet of new downtown commercial space, nor the ready money to build it, is all beside the point. There wasn't demand when the Empire State Building and Rockefeller Center were erected at the onset of the Great Depression, or when the World Trade Center went up during the protracted recession that encompassed the Vietnam War, the Arab oil embargo, Watergate, and their aftermath.

Build it and they will come: this has always been the operative imperative of such overreaching adventures, even if it takes decades for them to achieve anything approaching full occupancy and profitability. With the eyes of the world trained on the highest-profile architectural commission of modern times, the urge to build—and to build very big—could well supersede economic common sense, especially if public opinion favors the endeavor.

What is desired here above all is a tangible symbol—of undiminished American power in a dangerous new world order, of New York's indomitable spirit, of optimistic faith in the face of a worrisome future. The symbolic aspects of all skyscraper design from the very beginning of the form more than a century ago cannot be underestimated. Though we are taught that the skyscraper inexorably emerged from the financial pressures of building on land so valuable that the only place to go was up, the truth is that most iconic high-rises have had no such economic basis at all.

Foster's brilliantly calibrated design fairly screams "closure," that most egregious of contemporary fictions, which Americans seek so as to evade the forever unclosed realities of loss, grief, and memory. The public response to this proposal was so immediate and positive—it won hands down in an instant CNN poll—because among all the plans that were presented, it most clearly and defiantly replaced the doomed colossi with something that both evoked them and surpassed them.

Foster, like several of his fellow contestants, pointedly emphasized the escape routes from his structures, not normally the kind of thing that you would bring up in a twenty-minute prospectus for anything other than a nuclear power plant.

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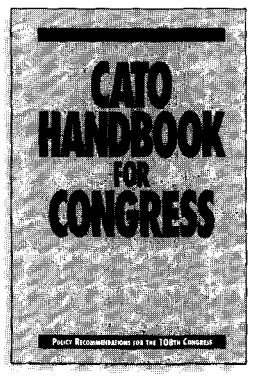

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(Where is the escape route from the plan itself?) Despite Foster's insistence that his building would be "the strongest, the safest," there was a sense of whistling past the graveyard in his overconfident demeanor while discussing emergency egress. Just as Libeskind hit on something psychologically profound in the need for remembrance in this commission, so did Foster in his canny replacement of New York's phantom limbs. We want things back the way they used to be, and he promised it more effectively than any of the others, foolhardy though that may be.

IF ONE PREDOMINANT theme emerged from the December presentations, it was not gardens in the sky or footprints on the ground, but immense—not to say insane—height. Five of the schemes would be taller than the World Trade Center, and four of them, including Libeskind's and Foster's, would become the tallest buildings in the world. This was the return of the repressed. The very thing that made the Twin Towers such an appealing mark in the first place has come back to haunt the future.

Despite the irresistible impulse to prove to Al Qaeda that they have not won, there can be little doubt that a World Trade Center re-built to such hubristic heights would set up an equivalently irresistible target to terrorists. (In a recent issue of *Private Eye*, a photomontage titled "New Design to Replace Twin Towers" showed the site with a huge bull's-eye hoisted above it.) Just as September 11 was not the first assault on the World Trade Center, the epochal impact of the catastrophe virtually assures that it will not be the last attack ever attempted there, either. For all the skilled professionalism on display in the new proposals, one's gut reaction was "What are these people thinking?"

But what can you do when your client has backed off only marginally from demanding the replacement of eleven million square feet of enclosed space, while at the same time public sentiment requires that the vast sacred squares be kept inviolate? The answer, of course, is to build onward and upward—the motto, after all, of New York state, whose incumbent governor (and chief power broker behind this enterprise) remained irresponsibly aloof from the recent proceedings while his re-election hung in the balance, and even afterward.

The alternative to a gargantuan approach was laid out in the concept advanced by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), long the undisputed arbiter of mainstream modernism but now seeking to re-shape its identity after its fatal defection to postmodernism. To emphasize its quest for a new image, the firm's presentation was made by Roger Duffy, a rising star whose promising design for the new Skyscraper Museum, housed in the lower floors of a Battery Park City hotel, is to be completed later this year. Here was a scatter-site approach, with nine wobbly-looking sixty-story towers spread evenly across the sixteen acres like so many squared-off, vertically suspended Slinkys. Duffy was the only architect not to use up his allotted press conference time slot, and the overly vague SOM plan gave the unfortunate appearance that there was just not enough to be said about it even by its authors.

THE REST OF the schemes offered a comprehensive catalog of current architectural trends, from the cutting edge to the retrograde. Adrift somewhere between those two extremes was the design devised by the team of Peter Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey, Steven Holl, and Richard Meier. Amused speculation ran high in architectural circles as to how these prima donnas would be able to work together, and the lifeless result of their efforts indicated that they indeed did not achieve a viable synthesis of their individual talents, varied though they are. Equally inert was Meier's startlingly hesitant and inarticulate introduction at the press conference, the antithesis of Libeskind's and Foster's dynamic ballyhoos. On such things the history of architecture turns.

The team's design makes stylized references to the destroyed World Trade Center. The five identical white, square, flat-roofed towers in an L-shaped ground plan seem like shrunken versions of the Twin Towers, some twenty stories shorter than their predecessors. Joined by a grid of landscaped terraces—yet another variation on the recurrent garden-in-the-sky theme—the composition from a distance reads like a supersized fragment of the old buildings' metal-framed outer walls, smoldering sections of which figured in so many photos of the destruction.

This static proposal is nonetheless preferable to Eisenman's earlier solo *Times* scheme for distorted towers that seemed to teeter on the brink of disintegration. As he explained on *The Charlie Rose Show*, "What we tried to do here is to ... express something about the occurrence as a memorial. And what we did was freeze a moment before collapse. This is what all Greek tragic sculpture did. Before death they caught a moment of beauty.... You've got office towers that seem to have this vibration coming from it a moment before disaster." This lord of architectural misrule defiled the memory of all who died there with his sick mimicry of horror.

THE INTERNATIONAL TEAM that called itself THINK Design (one thought of the old IBM slogan) offered three alternative proposals that diverge so wildly from one to the next that you wonder where the designers' true preferences lie. It was an excess of exertion that brought to mind the recent parricide case in which an opportunistic district attorney argued opposite sides of the same murder in two different trials. As unveiled by the Argentinian-born, New York–based Rafael Viñoly, there was a choice among a series of banal rectilinear skyscrapers (one of them an unthinkable 2,100 feet high, or some 175 stories) surrounding a vast greensward like Chicago's Lincoln Park. Then there was a humongous space-frame enclosure called The Great Hall, resembling some Brobdingnagian convention center. The final option was a pair of cylindrical double-helix scaffoldings (which many have compared to titanic Tinker Toys) to be erected above the footprints and to contain a variety of functions in enclosed modules suspended within each lacy tube. Among them would be a memorial museum housed in a diaphanous structure bridging the frameworks at the approximate point where the hijacked jets slammed into the Twin Towers. The last of these ideas was unquestionably the most provocative, and showed the hand of the Tokyo-based Shigeru Ban, who has specialized in such inventive lightweight structures, of which these would be by far the largest he has yet attempted. Just as refreshing is the architects' notion that this scheme should contain no commercial development, but should rather become the anchor of a downtown World Cultural Center—the boldest conceptual re-thinking of the site by any of the contestants.

The scheme by United Architects, an international pickup group headed by the Los Angeles–based Greg Lynn, one of today's hottest young Turks, was the most frightening of the lot. Lynn, a leading exponent of so-called "blob" architecture—freeform, computer-generated post-Gehry biomorphism—described a semicircular cluster of vertiginous, angular glass slabs that leaned in on each other like a band of drunken sailors staggering back to their ship. The accompanying video simulation of this incremental concept depicted faceted hulks of façade looming over little St. Paul's Chapel as though the doughty landmark were about to be stomped beneath the paws of a

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glazed Gotham Godzilla. For all his brave forays into uncharted architectural territory, Lynn appears not to have a natural instinct for large-scale composition at this point in his career, and some otherwise talented designers never do.

The kindest thing that can be said about the sad plans drawn up by the New York husband-and-wife partnership of Steven Peterson and Barbara Littenberg (the in-house planners retained by the LMDC) is that they brought into the debate the principles advanced by the neo-traditional New Urbanism movement. Thus widening the discussion beyond the familiar roster of avant-garde favorites gives the mix a more inclusive range, though Peterson and Littenberg in this instance can have won few converts to their cause.

During their lackluster presentation, the couple defensively asserted that there was more to this commission than mere architecture. True enough, but in light of their exceptionally amateurish designs one can see why they chose to stress their urban planning experience instead. A symmetrical pair of gradually set-back Art Decoid skyscrapers just slightly shorter than the Twin Towers would overlook a park ringed by smaller high-rises. This tepid blend of Beaux Arts monumentality and conservative early modernism brings to mind the hollow formalism of postwar East Berlin, without the *kitschig* élan of Stalinallee.

The most likely outcome of the competition—deemed a set of "study proposals" to get the client off the hook of having to select any one of the schemes in its entirety—is a compromise deal brokered by Larry Silverstein (who holds the lease to the site and the right to re-build there) and the LMDC. A probable scenario when a decision is announced at the end of January would see Foster teamed with SOM as local associated architects and Peterson/Littenberg as planning consultants. Although there is a separate competition pending for a memorial at Ground Zero, the enthusiastic response to that part of the Libeskind scheme could well lead to his inclusion as well.

Silverstein is said to favor the Foster proposal and is reported to have flown to London to meet with the architect before the public presentation in December. SOM and Peterson/Littenberg have been involved with the project for so long that some form of participation for them might well be deemed the decent thing to do. But such an outcome would not be mere charity, at least not in the case of SOM, whose track record in seeing large-scale buildings through to completion in Manhattan will come in handy even for so experienced a technocrat as Foster.

Still, the foolhardy persistence of the proud towers is what remains in the back of one's mind after all is said and done. Never has the amnesiac cast of the collective American consciousness been more disturbing than in this mad rush to create a new Tower of Babel. In its pseudo-Promethean grandiosity, all this seems like nothing so much as a secular, urbanistic version of the apocalyptic Christians' fervor to hasten the last days.

"Let us build us a city," the architects of Babel resolve in the Book of Genesis, "and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." To which God answered, "Now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." The results of the architectural ambition at Babel are well known. Whether one construes these ancient words as divine revelation or as mythical metaphor, they offer a cautionary tale for precisely these times. ■

What history can teach the architects at Ground Zero.

Monuments and Memories

By Andrew Butterfield

"The very notion of a modern monument is a contradiction in terms: if it is a monument, it cannot be modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument." The death of the monument has been proclaimed many times, most famously by Lewis Mumford in *The Culture of Cities* in 1938, where he argued that monuments have lost their aesthetic and social legitimacy. Mumford believed that the monument is the polar opposite of modern architecture and the progressive city.

> The notion of material survival by means of the monument no longer represents the deeper impulses of our civilization.

Andrew Butterfield is senior vice president of Salander-O'Reilly Galleries and the author of *The Sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio* (Yale University Press).

> Indeed, one has only to behold the monuments that have been built during the last century to observe how hollow the notion is. These Valhallas and Lincoln Memorials, these Victor Emanuel Monuments and Vimy Ridge Memorials, these "Eternal Lights"... are all the hollow echoes of an expiring breath, rattling ironically in the busy streets of our cities: heaps of stone which either confound the work of the living... or which are completely irrelevant to the living.

The view that memory is an impediment to modernity has been widely shared by architects, artists, and theorists. The obsolescence of the monument became almost an axiom of the modernist creed. The sculptor Donald Judd wrote that "there are no believable new monuments," and the historian and critic Sam Hunter declared that "contemporary monuments can no longer plausibly celebrate national heroes, patriotic or personal virtue or great historical events." Many more such pronouncements could be cited as evidence of the presentist temper.

But sometimes aesthetic theory and artistic fashion must yield before the harshness of lived history. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial began to change the prevailing opinion that the monument is dead, not least because it availed itself of a modernist vocabulary to accomplish its commemoration. The Oklahoma City National Memorial has had a similar effect. And then came Ground Zero. The sixteen acres where the World Trade Center stood have brutally reminded us that monuments are not a moribund artistic habit imposed on us by social convention and cultural inertia. Monuments are, rather, the products of primary human needs; and they serve these needs in a way that nothing else can serve them. People build monuments not because they do not know what else to do, but because there are wounds so deep that only monuments

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will serve to honor them.

Unfortunately, the haze of modernist theory still clouds the minds of many architects and planners. They themselves exemplify the dogmatic mentality that they decry in others. They know relatively little about the history, the function, and the variety of monuments, and yet they still presume, like Mumford, that architecture and urbanism is all that remembrance requires. This attitude is manifest in many of the designs and the statements of the architects of the master plans for the World Trade Center site. No doubt they all want to build something that will honor the dead; but a combination of arrogance and ignorance leads most of them to assume that buildings, the more spectacular the better, can do all the spiritual and cultural work. In "Plans in Progress," the video that accompanies the exhibit of the models at the Winter Garden, Ken Smith of THINK Design makes his priorities clear: "If you have only produced normative buildings and, you know, sort of banal public space but had a really great memorial, you would have missed the whole thing. I think in the end you have to have good urbanism and great architecture and a good memorial, and that would be a really good re-building." Not a great memorial, but great architecture and a good memorial: that is the way to avoid banality.

Obviously none of the contestants deny the memorial impulse at Ground Zero, but many of them wish to replace the traditional form of the monument, which is primarily petrean and sculptural, with a new one that will be architectural and urbanistic. This goal is most succinctly articulated by Peter Eisenman: "What is needed is a new idea about memorial. In other words—and we have provided seven memorial sites because we are not building an obelisk or anything—we are building a public place." As if a public place is in some sense itself a memorial. Steven Peterson of Peterson/Littenberg expresses the same ideal: "The city plan can set out a square that is beautifully placed and that can be/have a memorial quality, too, but you don't have to have a memorial in it." What is it about memorials that makes these people nervous? Why do they believe that commemoration is the enemy of art? Why can't they think of life and death at the same time? Whatever else Ground Zero will be, it will always be the site of a national catastrophe, a vast graveyard.

To be sure, the architects were asked to make a master plan for the entire site, not a memorial. (The memorial will be selected on the basis of a competition to be announced later this spring.) Still, these attitudes and these assumptions are important because the master plan will establish the placement and the context of the memorial, and also determine a good deal of its character. Do we really want the monument to be placed in a narrow strip at the northern end of the site and to be overshadowed by a forest of buildings, as it would be in the plan by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, or to be subsumed and metastasized into the grandiose and, at ground level, chaotic scheme of Daniel Libeskind? (Libeskind's gift for morbidity has oddly failed him here.) Do we really want to take an elevator to a memorial in the sky, as in United Architecture's design, or to have seven memorials instead of one, as Eisenman has proposed? With the exception of Norman Foster's plan, none of the designs manifests an understanding of the way monuments work.

It would make sense, then, to learn more about the history and the character of monuments before our aesthetic and architectural clichés run away with the site. This is especially necessary since monuments have generally played a smaller role in modern American life than in other cultures. Although monuments have been a feature of human culture throughout the world since the Neolithic Age, most people now know very little about what monuments do and why they exist. Fortunately, in the past twenty years or so, there has been a surge of interest in the monument as a cultural phenomenon, and scholars from different disciplines have written wisely and learnedly on the subject.

What is a monument? The word comes from the Latin noun *monumentum*, which is derived from the Latin verb *moneo*. The primary meaning of *moneo* is "to bring to the notice of, to remind, or to tell of." *Monumentum* consequently is a thing with this function, specifically something that stimulates the remembrance of a person or an event. *Monumentum* could be used for anything with this purpose—a text, a building, a work of art; but its primary denotation was a tomb or a funerary memorial. In English, the word "monument" retains this basic meaning; it has special reference to a tomb, a cenotaph, or a memorial.

Monuments provide an enduring physical demonstration of the fact of the existence of a person or an event. It marks a spot and it says who. And it says so forever. It is an object that serves as the locus of the memories of a person or a group, and it makes those memories tangible—literally so. Hence the most basic component of a monument is its marker: the physical object erected to mark a locus in perpetuity. Owing to the emphasis on permanence, survival, and continuity, the marker naturally is made of the most durable materials—stone and metal.

Markers come in a seemingly bewildering variety. Consider, for example, monuments to the dead: among the most basic types there are headstones, plaques, slabs, stelae with or without effigies, wall tombs with or without effigies, free-standing tombs, and statues. Then there are the monuments to the living—a much smaller group of objects, as only an exceptionally finite group of living individuals are ever honored in this fashion. Such monuments are almost always statues raised on pedestals. They are erected in praise of what sociologist and zoologists (and now politicians and journalists) call alpha males: rulers and victors, whether in athletic contests or in war.

The simplest form of the monument are giant stones or pillars, known as megaliths or menhirs, a Welsh word meaning "long stone." Generally, these are aniconic; that is, they do not depict or represent an image in any way. Indeed, often they are completely unworked and unadorned. Sometimes they do not even bear an inscription. Megaliths are thought to be the oldest form of monument known to mankind. The earliest examples date from the Neolithic period. And seven thousand years later it is still an effective type, as the Washington Monument and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial show.

This primordial form of the monument is also perhaps the most revealing about its fundamental appeal. Human beings feel an almost instinctual urge to congregate for remembrance and worship at a stone marker. If we look at the goal of a pilgrimage or the center of a rite, it is often either a rock or made of rock. Instances of stone worship are found in every culture, all over the world, throughout the course of human history. It is with us today. In Jerusalem, one may observe the members of the three religions worshipping at rocks: the Christians at the Holy Sepulchre, the Jews at the Wailing Wall, the Muslims at the Dome of the Rock. Each site is the locus of the most profound meaning, the focus of the most intense emotion, the repository and the stimulus of the most central tenets in the collective memory of the faithful. Yet in all three cases the rock or rocks at the focus of devotion are aniconic. They represent the deepest meanings, and they are sur-

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rounded within their precincts by signs of their importance, but the rocks themselves bear no sign, symbol, or image. The rocks appear to be just rocks, except for the faithful who come from all over the world to worship there.

MANY OF THE greatest anthropologists and historians of religion have written about stone worship. In *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Mircea Eliade began his account of sacred stones by noting their conspicuousness and their permanence. "For the primitive," he remarked,

> nothing was more direct and autonomous in the completeness of its strength, nothing more noble or more awe-inspiring, than a majestic rock. Above all, a stone *is*. It always remains itself, exists of itself. Rock shows mankind something that transcends the precariousness of his humanity: an absolute mode of being. Its strength, its motionlessness, its size and its strange outline are none of them human. In its grandeur, its hardness, its shape and its color, man is faced with a reality and a force that belong to some other world than the profane world of which he is himself a part.

Eliade identified a number of special powers and functions that are at times attributed to sacred stones. Three of these powers seem especially relevant to the discussion of the monument.

It was a special function of sacred stones to serve as a witness. Witness stones were common in antiquity: recall the lithos in front of the Royal Stoa in the Agora in Athens. Witness stones also appear in the Bible. In the Book of Genesis, it is reported that Jacob and Laban set up a heap of stones, a pillar, or both at Gilead to be a permanent testimony to their concord: "Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou, and let it be for a witness between me and thee. And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones, and they took stones and made a heap.... And Laban said, This heap of stones is a witness between me and thee this day." Similarly, at the end of the Book of Joshua, it is recorded that Joshua erected a witness stone at Shechem after the Israelites re-dedicated themselves to the worship of their God: "So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and Joshua took a great stone, and set it up there and Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the lord which he spoke unto us, it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest you deny your god."

It was also the purpose of sacred stones to represent the ancestors or the tribal deities of a group. In Genesis, when Jacob wakes from his dream of angels descending on a ladder from heaven, he "rose up early the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it ... and Jacob said, This stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house." In his analysis of this episode, James Frazer points to the existence of other sacred stones all over the world. To cite just one example among many, he reports that "there is hardly a village in Northern India which has not its sacred stone. Very often the stone is not appropriated to any one deity in particular, but represents the aggregate of the local divinities who have the affairs of the community under their charge."

Stones can represent deceased ancestors as well. Discussing the religious practices of aboriginal tribes in Australia, Emile Durkheim observed in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* that "it will be remembered that the fabulous ancestors from whom each clan is supposed to be descended, formerly lived on earth and left traces of their passage there. These traces consist especially in stones and rocks which they deposited at certain places, or which were formed at the spots where they entered into the ground. These rocks and stones are considered the bodies or parts of the bodies of the ancestors, whose memory they keep alive; they represent them."

Thus sacred stones serve as the center for the group and as the group's point of contact with the other two realms of being, the immortal and the dead. Such points of contact are sometimes referred to as the *axis mundi*, the fulcrum of the universe. Frazer, Eliade, and Robertson Smith agree that the bethel of Jacob must be seen as such a cosmically pivotal location, since it was not just the House of God but specifically the place where, by means of the ladder of angels, communication took place between heaven and earth. The omphalos or navel stone at Delphi, the Ka'aba at Mecca, the umbilicus in the Roman Forum, and the rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem are all stones that were widely believed at one time to be the center of the world. Eliade observes, moreover, that it is common to perceive a tomb as such a site. He notes that Erwin Rohde and Jane Harrison, the distinguished historians of Greek religion, both

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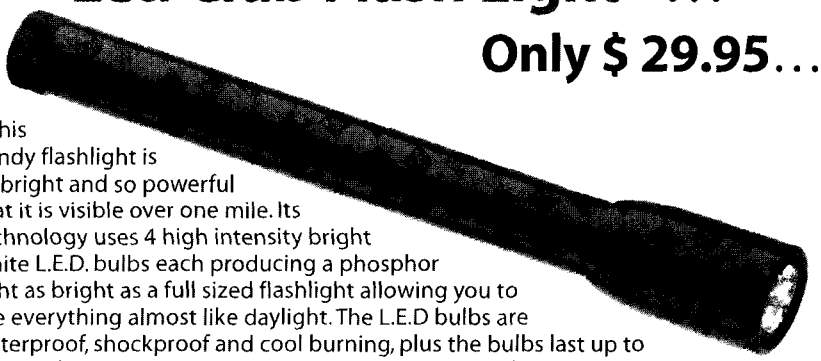

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suggested that the omphalos at Delphi originally represented a tomb, and that the Roman poet Varro specified that it was the tomb of the serpent of Delphi. Eliade elaborates: "A tomb, seen as a point of contact between the world of the dead, of the living and of the gods can also be a center, an omphalos of the earth."

THE SECOND CONSTITUTIVE element of a monument is the memoranda, or the biographical information preserved by the marker. In ancient Greek, one of the words for monument and the word for memory are the same: *mnema*. But monuments are a special vessel for memory. They do not record everything about a person or an event—far from it. They seem to exclude the kind of personal memories that most of us recall of the departed, and instead to register only an extremely narrow spectrum of information about the object of our affection. So what kind of memory do monuments traditionally preserve? What is it that they report and transmit?

Perhaps the most basic fact that a monument typically records is the name of the person, the family, the community, or the event that it commemorates. This primary emphasis on the name was true in antiquity and it is true today. This hardly needs demonstration. Nearly every town in America and Europe has a monument that lists the names of those who died defending their country. Monuments are witness stones, and the names on them are like names on a public record or a historical document: a kind of declaration of the fact of existence.

The issue of monumental imagery is more complicated. Some monuments have no images. Some have images, but wholly idealized ones: they may represent a specific person, but they do not attempt to depict his actual features. And some monuments have images that record the features of the person in a more or less accurate and particularized fashion. Of course, there are many degrees of verisimilitude, and differences of aesthetic skill, between accuracy and idealization.

Sometimes these differences in conception and execution are owed to the relationship that can exist between portraiture and honor. In Renaissance Florence, sumptuary legislation forbade all but a few highly honored persons from being laid out at their funerals with their bodies and their faces exposed for the mourners to see. Though not regulated by law, the same reservation evidently applied to the decorum of tomb design, with the result that only a handful of highly placed persons are honored in tombs with portrait effigies. This honor was not simply a matter of wealth and power: no member of the Medici family is commemorated in this manner, although for much of the period they effectively ruled the city. It was, rather, a matter of station and office. In an age in which the church controlled burial and commemoration, tombs with portrait effigies were typically the privilege of princes of the church, of founding donors of religious institutions, and of persons honored in civic funerals for their service to the city. One can cite many other instances of restrictions on the right to have a portrait monument: in medieval Rome, only popes and archbishops got them, and in medieval and Renaissance Venice, portrait monuments were reserved, with few exceptions, for doges and soldiers who deserved special recognition for their service to the city.

PERHAPS ALL PORTRAITURE exhibits a tendency toward conventionality and standardization, but this seems to be particularly true of portraits on monuments. On medieval and Renaissance tombs, more emphasis is placed on the ceremonial garb of office than on the depiction of individual character. In ancient Greece, monumental portraiture was almost wholly conventional. Tomb statuary and stelae depict the dead as idealized types whose features embody aristocratic stereotypes of moral good and physical beauty. Convention was the rule as well in statues of athletes, an important genre of Greek sculpture. Thus Pliny writes that "it was not usual to model likenesses of men unless for some reason or other they deserved lasting honor, first for a victory in the sacred contests, especially at Olympia, where it was the custom to dedicate statues of all who were victorious; and if they won there three times, their statues were modeled in their own likeness." As Pliny so clearly states, the right to a portrait was an honor, and the right to have an accurate and individualized portrait was an even greater honor, vouchsafed only to those thought most deserving of enduring recognition.

The biographical details preserved and expressed by inscriptions likewise tend to be limited and conventionalized. In addition to the name, such description is usually confined to a list of offices and honors, often in an acknowledgment that the deceased has served the public good in a noteworthy fashion. Even people of remarkable complexity and achievement are often reduced to the briefest of honorific terms. Thus the tomb of Cosimo de Medici simply records that he was called the father of his country, and the monument to Bartolomeo Colleoni states, "In recognition of his military authority, perfectly served." In ancient Greece, the inscriptions on monuments often said little more than that the departed was *agathos kai sophron aner*, "a good and wise man." Such brevity is still typical today.

As these examples demonstrate, the language of inscriptions also tends to be highly formulaic and standardized. Like the language of ritual, it shows a great respect for established norms inherited from tradition, and little interest in innovation or variation. By means of this standardization, it often limits the commemoration of an individual to a single aspect: how the dead personified a social ideal that is regarded as a central and permanent value. Writing of archaic Greek monuments, Joseph Day has observed that

> the man was dead and gone, but the marker and the epitaph provided a substitute for him; that is, they reduced the complexity of a man to a simple, permanent, monumental form that represented to the community of the living what he had now become, i.e., one of their ideal dead. This state of idealized death could not be portrayed as a biographical moment like actual death in battle. It was a state of moral and physical perfection, artificially created by verbal and visual motifs any contemporary would recognize from previous acquaintance with literary encomium and commemorative art.

I think that this tendency is often true of monuments and points to a widespread feature of them: they commemorate the dead and other figures from the past as personifications of the values of the group. They do not emphasize personal detail and idiosyncratic data; they promote the exemplary. According to the rules of both classical and Renaissance rhetoric, funeral oratory was intended to be a kind of instructive praise that inspired the audience to emulate the virtues of the deceased. Monuments often serve the same function. This points to an interesting fact about monuments. Often they are meant to preserve not only the identity of the departed, but also the identity of a social group—the family, clan, city, nation, or religion—to which the deceased belonged.

THE THIRD CONSTITUTIVE element of the monument is the precinct. Monuments are not placed just anywhere in a city or a landscape. They tend to be erected in two kinds of sites. The first is along major thoroughfares, so that the greatest number of people can see them and remember the

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persons whom they commemorate. Thus the roads leading in and out of Athens, Rome, and other major cities were major sites for monuments in antiquity. The Greek soldiers in the *Odyssey* declare that the ideal spot for a tomb is a promontory overlooking the Hellespont, so that "it might be seen from far over the sea both by men that now are and that shall be born hereafter."

The other typical site for a monument is a space of some kind that has been clearly demarcated and set off from the world at large. To emphasize their distinction, such spaces are often geometric in plan, and often marked along their borders with a fence or a barrier of some kind. Examples of spaces of this kind that regularly serve as the sites of monuments are graveyards, churches, or temples (including their grounds), chapels, battlefields, and central public or civic spaces such as town squares. Such locations serve to provide common ground for groups. Specifically, they are places where individuals can go to experience membership, to re-establish their identity as parts of a special and distinct social body.

Monuments are erected for groups, such as the family, community, city-state, nation, or religion, and they are erected specifically in the particular sites where the members of these groups go to affirm their commonality or common identity. Thus, the tomb of the patriarch of a family is set in the church or the chapel of his clan, and a statue of a national hero is placed in the central square of his country's capital. But that is not the end of the story, or of the monument's ambition. Since Durkheim, it has been widely acknowledged that a clan or a nation defines itself not only horizontally—that is, in relation to itself—but also vertically: that is, in relation to God and the sacred.

This notion may now make us uncomfortable, living as we do in a secular society; but it is important to stress that historically the spaces of the kind that I am describing have been sanctified. They are places of high symbolic significance, exceedingly rich in meaning, and often the sites of group rites or rituals. Owing to the sacral and symbolic character of the precinct, the members of the group approach a monument with a high expectation that the monument will provide an epiphany of meaning, and specifically that it will be an expression of the identity, the history, and the philosophy of the group. Today this is still obvious in the case of sites such as graveyards, temples, and chapels; and, until the modern era, it was equally obvious in the case of central city squares. We can see that it is true as well of battlefields. We speak of a battlefield as Lincoln spoke of it, as ground that has been hallowed by blood spilled for the sake of a common cause or a common identity. Like Lincoln, when we visit Gettysburg and its monuments, we recall our special history and identity, and honor the sacrifice of the men who died to establish and to preserve it.

In the modern world, it is has also been common to place monuments in civic parks. These may seem like an exception to the rule, since although parks are public land, they rarely have the communal or sacral associations of the sort I have been discussing. The parks of New York City are filled with statues of writers, statesmen, and heroes of the past. But none of these monuments, so far as I know, now serve as the focal point for any group. Nor were they ever meant to do so. Perhaps that is one reason why they have failed as monuments, in the sense that the individuals whom they seek to commemorate are often forgotten.

BY THEIR FAILURE, such weak or low-functioning monuments point to the fourth constitutive element of the monument: the act of commemoration. There is a tendency among historians and critics to treat the monument purely as a thing. They often discuss it in strictly formal and typological terms, or merely as a category of sculpture. But like many other things in the world, the monument can only be understood in terms of its use. It is a tool and an instrument in a series of extraordinarily complex personal and social processes. The monument cannot be understood without looking at its dynamic, immaterial dimension—at the acts of remembrance for which it is used.

Throughout history, high-functioning monuments have been conceived in relation to regular and even programmatic rites of memory. Before the modern era, these acts often had the character of religious ritual. The Medici tombs at San Lorenzo in Florence were placed at sites where the dead whom they honored would be officially and ceremonially commemorated throughout the year, and these rites involved not only the members of the family but also officials of the state and other institutions, as well as the canons of the church, whose chief professional obligation was to say masses in memory of the Medici dead. While perhaps exceptional in scale, the Medici practice of memorialization was otherwise typical in late medieval and Renaissance Europe.

The connection between the monument and the rites of memory can be so strong that many monuments even feature reliefs that depict a ritual, a ceremony, or a procession. An obvious example is the Ara Pacis in Rome. It was commissioned in 13 B.C.E. by the Roman Senate to celebrate Augustus's victories in Gaul and Spain. The two long sides of the Ara Pacis are filled with reliefs that show a procession led by Augustus and including the imperial family and other top civic and religious officials. Scholars differ about exactly which procession is depicted, but they generally agree that it is a procession related to the foundation of the Ara Pacis. Indeed, many Roman monuments illustrate the ritual or the ceremonial that took place at the foundation of the monument itself. Triumphal arches often bear reliefs showing a triumphal entry through an arch; and funerary monuments, whether for emperors or freed slaves, show the honorific rites that the dead received at his funeral.

This practice was not confined to antiquity. The tombs of bishops and popes in the Middle Ages often depict or allude to elements in the official ceremonial of their burial. This tradition continued into the Renaissance. The depiction of the dead lying in state on a bier and beneath a funerary catafalque is fairly common on Renaissance tombs. All such representations are honorific. They show that the represented person received the full measure of acclaim to which his station and his achievement entitled him. And they are an absolute sign that the person is or was exemplary, worthy of imitation. Moreover, such representations are prescriptive: they establish a model or an ideal of the rites of remembrance that should take place at the site in the future.

The most basic rite of remembrance is for the visitor to leave something at the site as a mark of love, remembrance, and respect. It is a universal practice. Around the world and throughout time, people have poured libations or placed rocks or flowers on the gravestones of their ancestors, and pilgrims have left votives at the tombs of saints. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, visitors leave so many things—flowers, photographs, letters, medals, even a Harley-Davidson motorcycle—that there is an entire warehouse to preserve them all. At Ground Zero, there arose a tradition of bringing banners and T-shirts with handwritten messages to the fence at St. Paul's Chapel.

I do not mean to be merely nostalgic. Plainly our existences are not like ancient or medieval or Renaissance or nineteenth-century existences. We lead lives that are less formalized and less sacralized, and our acts of remembrance typically do not take the form of religious rituals. Yet the stubborn fact remains that, even in our

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secular and disenchanted and accelerated times, the most successful monuments are still those that become sites of regular commemoration. For many Americans, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the most powerful monument in the country. There is no liturgical calendar of rites there, nor is there a prescribed routine or custom that the acts of remembrance must follow; but the commemoration is regular, and every day people go there to remember those who fought and died in the war. It brings us together on common ground, and it gives us a place where we can literally get in touch with the past.

A monument is both a personal experience and a collective experience. "Collective sentiments can become conscious of themselves," Durkheim instructed, "only by fixing themselves upon external objects." A monument is one of the means by which an aggregate of individuals transforms itself into a community that feels bound together by a common moral experience and a common historical framework. It is proof that the past is real, and that the past is still present. A monument is where the mythical and historical memory of a person or an event comes to earth and, by adopting material form, lives on. A dolmen in lower Manhattan? We could do worse. We probably will. ■

Democracy's Pains

By NAOMI DAREMBLUM

In the Shadow of the Liberator: Hugo Chávez and the Transformation of Venezuela by Richard Gott

(Verso, 160 pp., $18)

I.

LAST APRIL, HUGO CHÁVEZ, the president of Venezuela, was deposed in a dramatic coup reminiscent of more troubled times in Latin America. With tear gas in the air, sharpshooters and armed gunmen exchanged fire across a crowded street, turning an opposition march heading toward the Presidential Palace into a bloody melee. Images of the terrible scene were shown across the country (and across the world) on half of a split screen, while on the other half Chávez denounced an ongoing strike and the march. The televised images did not last long. Accusing the private television stations of incitement, Chávez took them off the air and continued his speech without mention of the violence. But these images had tremendous consequences. By day's end, in response to the violence, the Armed Forces' High Command had stepped in and demanded that Chávez resign, and the next morning Venezuela awoke to find that it had a new president, a dull business leader by the name of Pedro Carmona.

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What followed next brought back other memories. After swearing himself in, Carmona dismantled the National Assembly, dismissed the judiciary, and suspended the Constitution. Television images then showed the members of Chávez's Cabinet and the dismissed Assembly being taken prisoner, while other Chávez supporters were run out of their homes by crowds administering vigilante justice.

Yet miscalculation gave this story an unexpected twist. Almost immediately, Latin American governments expressed concern about Carmona's suspension of constitutional rule. Their fears seemed confirmed when leaked information revealed that Chávez had not resigned but had instead been forcibly removed from power. By the afternoon, thousands of Chávez's supporters had taken to the streets and were marching toward the Presidential Palace clamoring for his return. With help from troops loyal to Chávez, the citizens who voted for him accomplished what many considered impossible: the next morning he returned as president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. A victory over the retrograde forces of oligarchic authoritarianism was declared.

Whether it was a victory for democracy remains an open question. In the months immediately following the failed coup, a tense calm took hold in Venezuela. Both a contrite Chávez and a stunned opposition called for reconciliation and declared themselves willing to engage in a national dialogue. But their good intentions were short-lived. After a visit last summer by representatives of the United Nations Development Program, the Organization of American States, and the Carter Center, an agreement was reached to install a roundtable dialogue under their auspices. By the end of October, when the roundtable was set to begin, the sense of political crisis was acute. The Coordinadora Democrática, the umbrella association representing the opposition, had successfully organized a one-day strike for October 22. The following day, eleven military officers declared themselves in civil disobedience, calling on their fellow officers and citizens to join them and leaving the country in political limbo for six hours until the Armed Forces High Command declared its support for Chávez, thereby averting another coup. The Coordinadora's failure to distance itself from the rebel officers, many of whom had been involved in the April coup, left it open to many criticisms. It could not credibly pursue dialogue with the government or campaign for a referendum on Chávez if it simultaneously encouraged the military subversion of the legal order.

It was under this cloud of political hostility that the dialogue between the government and the opposition began. Since then, the crisis has only worsened. The Coordinadora seemed to gain the upper hand in December, when it began an open-ended national strike that brought PDVSA, the state-owned oil industry, to a halt. Chávez's government has lost around $2 billion in unrecoverable revenues in the intervening weeks, and it is perilously close to defaulting on its domestic loans. The Coordinadora's resolve shows no sign of abating. Indeed, it has increased its pressure on the government with the addition of bank executives who announced in January that they would join the strike in support of the oil workers.

And yet, all the Coordinadora's efforts notwithstanding, Chávez has been able to ride out the strike and its crippling effects, and also slowly to regain some control of PDVSA with an ambitious restructuring plan. Most remarkably, he has done so without recourse to a state of emergency or to the brutal use of force, even when there have been violent confrontations between his supporters and the opposition. Chávez is still standing, but Venezuela is edging closer to the brink of civil war.

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II.

HUGO CHÁVEZ MADE his political debut as the leader of a coup in 1992. Then a lieutenant colonel in the Venezuelan army, Chávez appealed to his comrades in a nationwide broadcast to lay down their arms and surrender. According to the folklore of the event, his message took only about one minute to deliver but managed to capture the country's collective imagination and to propel him into Venezuelan politics. What so enthralled Venezuelans about Chávez was that he was obviously unlike any other politician the country had seen. Like the majority of the country's population, Chávez was visibly of mestizo heritage and spoke informally but effectively in the lurid language of the interior. He was young, clean-cut, educated, and charismatic. More importantly, he accepted personal responsibility for the failure of the coup. In Venezuelan politics, no one had ever taken personal responsibility for anything. Chávez's message of accountability touched a raw nerve with a citizenry that was deeply disappointed with years of corruption and stagnation and yearned for change.

This sense of political hopelessness was new. In the 1960s and 1970s, while other countries in the region languished under dictatorial and repressive military regimes, Venezuela was an oasis of democratic rule. This exceptional political situation was achieved through a pact within the elite, which provided for alternation in government between the left-of-center party and the right-of-center party, and minimized conflict through dialogue with groups in civil society. This political arrangement, known as the Pact of Punto Fijo, worked well since its inception in 1958 because it granted electoral participation through the political parties and channeled other political involvement through civic groups. But it was strengthened further and thrived during the 1970s owing to the oil boom and Venezuela's consequent prosperity. As the price of oil shot up from $3 a barrel to $14 a barrel, Venezuela's coffers overflowed, making it one of the richest states in Latin America. Some people called it Saudi Venezuela.

But the Pact of Punto Fijo had its flaws. What was initially a managed but productive political dialogue ossified into a sclerotic system that stifled dissent and prevented political alternatives from emerging. The parties' vertical integration with civil society facilitated corruption, which, given the oil wealth, was tremendous in scope. And when oil prices collapsed in the 1980s, the country's revenues plummeted. Venezuela rudely learned that it did not have the resources to repay the huge loans that had been taken out during the fat years. With a shrinking GDP per capita and rising inflation, Venezuelans discovered that their high standard of living had been a subsidized mirage of profligate government spending.

In 1989, when an austerity package suddenly doubled the price of transportation, the poorest Venezuelans descended from their shantytowns surrounding Caracas to protest, to riot, and to burn. The destructive rage of the poor was such that President Carlos Andrés Pérez declared a state of emergency and called on the army to get the situation under control. After three days of violence and repression, all memory of Saudi Venezuela was gone. To this day it is unknown how many people died during the Caracas riots: the official figure is around three hundred, while other sources cite numbers in the thousands. What is clear is that if the riots revealed the depth of dissatisfaction and political alienation in the lowest classes of society, the government's repressive reaction displayed its unwillingness to deal respectfully and inclusively with the disaffected. The ensuing crisis of legitimacy spurred a wide range of groups concerned with the country's survival to suggest a sweeping plan of reforms. Others, Chávez among them, believed that a complete razing of the regime was necessary, and it was in this spirit that the coup of 1992 took place.

FOR ALL ITS drama, the coup was anything but spontaneous. Exposed to the condition of the country's poor and to the corrosive effect of corruption (even in the traditionally scrupulous army), Chávez and a group of like-minded officers founded the Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario, known as the MBR-200, in the early 1980s. The MBR-200 debated the country's deteriorating situation for years, even contemplating the possibility of military action, but only after the Caracas riots did the group finally resolve to do something about it. Defying the army's apolitical tradition, Chávez and his group believed that the army, as the most respected and the least corrupt institution in the country, had a crucial role to play in upstaging the ruling elite and transforming Venezuelan democracy. They also hoped that their military action would trigger a popular revolt.

They succeeded in electrifying Venezuela's weary population, but the rebellion failed miserably, landing Chávez and his co-conspirators in prison. Chávez made the most of his time in jail, refining his revolutionary ideas and gaining important political allies. The Yare Prison, where all the coup officers were interned, soon became a pilgrimage site for journalists, intellectuals, and politicians, many of whom would later prove useful allies for Chávez. In jail, what had been an isolated military initiative began to take shape as a social and political movement. It even seemed possible that Chávez would bank on his coup popularity and fashion out of it a political career, gaining electorally what he had failed to gain by force. Remarkably, the institutional option turned out not to be so far-fetched: in 1994 Chávez was pardoned, and by 1998 he was running for president.

During the campaign of 1998, while the establishment political candidates struggled to find a language to communicate with the dissatisfied public and the independent politicians talked merely of reform, Chávez crisscrossed the country colorfully lambasting them all for being out of touch. His slogan—"the people with Chávez can never be defeated"—was not just a riff on a popular Latin American motto ("the people united can never be defeated"), it was also a plan of action. The cornerstone of Chávez's campaign was to rally Venezuela's poor—a staggering two-thirds of the population—into a powerful political force. It was not all that difficult. All Chávez had to do was open Pandora's box and a swell of class resentments and race resentments came tumbling out.

Chávez became the delivering savior of the masses, and he did not shy away from developing this messianic perception. This aggressively eschatological rhetoric worried many Venezuelans, who wondered if Chávez was trying to revive Che Guevara's long-lost dreams. It did not help that he often spoke warmly of Castro and Mao. But the crowds that had taken to the streets during the Caracas riots could not have cared less about the nuances of ideology. After winning the elections in a landslide, Chávez was sworn in as president in February 1999 by placing his hand on the constitution of 1961 and declaring it dead.

III.

THE ONE THING that can be said with certainty is that Chávez has delivered on his campaign promises. In the four years since he took office, he has dismantled the state, called a constitutional assembly, ratified a new constitution, created the Fifth Republic, and

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Lini

i

Through live oaks, sunset's sanguine oval slips its limits, grows
cold, oblate, until thin, receding, near-gone, merely blue.

ii

Blight over. The dog rolls into a farther sky. Its loss
costs no more than what we give for this augury of ice.

iii

Corn low, a new moon with the old still in its arms, stores full,
wool piled for mending: it's now the well-blessed begin to mourn.

David Yezzi

been re-elected as president under the new legal order. This political transformation required an intense campaigning effort on Chávez's part, which still continues. The most spectacular platform for this campaign has been his weekly radio/television program *Aló, Presidente*, or *Hello, President*. The program is more like *Imus in the Morning* than an American president's weekly radio address. Chávez imparts history lessons, recommends books, shares recipes, shows videos, and talks about his family.

But the crucial element of the show is the telephone calls. Venezuelans wishing to talk to the president, to *their* president, can simply call in. The calls are not just about political issues—there are warm testimonies of Chávez's personal intervention on a caller's behalf, and calls about complaints or suggestions that citizens might have. Often people just want to tell Chávez about their lives, their personal problems, their broken hearts. The show, which can last for hours (the record is five), is Chávez at his populist best, wearing a tracksuit in the Venezuelan national colors and sipping a cup of coffee.

Since he took office, Chávez's rhetorical tone has, if anything, hardened. During his re-election campaign he led huge rallies in the hymn of Venezuela's Federal Wars, a battle cry of *oligarcas temblad, viva la libertad, arriba la esperanza de la revolución*—"Tremble oligarchs! Long live liberty! May the hope of revolution triumph!" As criticism in the press intensified and became overtly political, Chávez increasingly used his program and the state-owned television station to debate journalists and to warn the public against believing them. At public events he went so far as to single out journalists or media owners who had been particularly tough on him. He has accused the newspapers and private television stations of openly campaigning against him, and they in turn have accused Chávez and his followers of intimidation and harassment. The tension is such that Chávez's government has been censured by several international press organizations.

Not even the Catholic Church has been able to escape Chávez's excesses. After the president had many times proclaimed Jesus's support for his revolution, the Episcopal Conference of Venezuela finally sent him a scathing letter requesting that he refrain from making Jesus his advocate. Chávez, who often adduces religious fables in his speeches and does so with the facility of a Christian preacher, replied in a twenty-page letter in which he compared Jesus's struggles against corruption in the Temple with his own against the forces of the Fourth Republic. As Perón is rumored to have told Trujillo, it never bodes well for a Latin American president to have the Catholic Church against him.

Even more worrisome, Chávez has repeatedly acted in ways that have confirmed his adversaries' worst suspicions. One of his first presidential acts was to send a letter exalting the new Venezuelan revolution to the infamous Venezuelan terrorist Ilich Ramírez Sánchez, better known as Carlos the Jackal. Although Chávez defended the letter as a humane gesture, it was widely interpreted as a statement of support for the Jackal's cause. Shortly thereafter Chávez traveled to Cuba, embraced Castro, and declared that the Venezuelan people would soon be swimming in the same sea of happiness as the Cuban people. He also had the dubious honor of being the first world leader since the Gulf War to travel to Iraq on a state visit, enjoying a ride in Saddam Hussein's Mercedes. Worse, Chávez came close to causing a regional crisis when he made overtures to the Colombian left-wing guerrilla group FARC in the middle of delicate negotiations between the group and the government of Andrés Pastrana.

Chávez's adversaries maintain that all this is more than an interminable list of political faux pas—that something far more sinister is at work here. In November 2000, the National Assembly passed legislation that allowed Chávez to make decrees with the force of law in a number of discretionary areas for the duration of a year. Some forty-four decrees were passed during that year, mostly laws in the socio-economic realm, some in consultation with the pertinent private sectors but mainly in secrecy and without much public debate or feedback. One of these decrees, the Agriculture and Landholding Law, established the basis for the expropriation of fallow land and its use as public property for agriculture. This struck many as an eerie echo of the land-expropriation program of the Sandinistas. Still, as his supporters inside and outside Venezuela correctly maintain, there have been no expropriations, no confiscation of properties, no nationalization of foreign-owned interests. The newspapers and the other media continue to be free to criticize Chávez; and although they are constantly intimidated and harassed, there have been no closings, always the telltale sign of worse things to come.

ALL THIS IS TRUE—but it is also irrelevant. Chávez, in his rhetoric and in his actions, is indeed the reason for the political storm that is brewing in Venezuela today, and his detractors are right in pointing to his worrisome air of familiarity with the caudillos and leftist revolutionaries of yesteryear. The most striking of these precursors is certainly Juan Domingo Perón, the president of Argentina from 1946 to 1955 (and again in 1973 for about a year) and the great chilling symbol of populism in Latin America.

Perón, who like Chávez came to politics through the military and a coup, reshaped the Argentine political landscape by choosing to represent the millions of workers who back then made up the marginalized urban poor—the most significant, and alienated, political force of his time. Like Chávez, the charismatic and politically astute Perón defeated the established political elites by incorporating the masses into the system. They became his unconditional allies, who owed him their improved working conditions, better salaries, longer holidays, and an expanded list of constitutionally stipulated social rights. Like Chávez with his Bolivarian ideology, the Peronista movement advocated not only social justice and economic freedom for the poor, but also its own brand of independent foreign policy, defined by Perón during the years of

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the Cold War as the "third position." And although Perón's project of enfranchisement and redistribution had the complete support of the labor movement—the kind of support that Chávez lacks—it too eventually ran into an increasingly harsh opposition whose goal was Peron's resignation and exile.

But Chávezism is not just a revival of Peronism. There is a novel aspect of the Chávez phenomenon that is more disturbing, because it is more of a piece with his post-totalitarian time: the democratic-messianic thrust of his ideas. The present Venezuelan conflict should not be viewed as a simple re-framing of the left-right confrontation in Latin America, as another episode of Latin American revolution and reaction, but as a more consequential and remarkable political contest about the meaning of democracy in the twenty-first century. In this context, the clashing alternatives are democracy as a moderate system of government and democracy as a political form of redemption. Chávez preaches an eschatological construction of democracy. He is historically significant because he represents a particular perversion of the great contemporary enterprise of democratization. He sees himself as democracy's Bolivarian redeemer.

IV.

Bolivarianism is Chávez's innovation in political ideology, his personal ideological pastiche. He cobbled it together from the thought of three important figures in Latin American history: Simón Bolívar, Simón Rodríguez, and Ezequiel Zamora. At the heart of Bolivarianism is the nexus between the nation and the soldier-leader, whose mission is to educate, to liberate, and to lead the people-in-arms.

Chávez's fascination with Bolívar, the great South American general who was responsible for Venezuela's independence early in the nineteenth century, is hardly unique. Every government of Venezuela, and perhaps of every other Andean country that Bolívar liberated, has promoted him into the symbol of national liberation. What seems to be new is Chávez's focus on Bolívar's political analysis of colonial Latin America and on his concrete institutional proposals. Bolívar believed that after independence the administrative provinces created by Spanish rule had no chance of surviving and developing politically, and that they could stave off future attempts at colonial re-conquest only by uniting in some sort of federal arrangement. Although he would have liked this federal arrangement to span the entirety of the Spanish-speaking continent, Bolívar made less ambitious proposals for cooperation and mutual defense between countries, and Chávez has followed him in this line of thinking.

Regarding the internal ordering of these new societies, Bolívar held equality to be the foremost right of citizens, and he believed, following Rousseau, that this right could be realized only by means of political participation. But Bolívar also worried that the people who lived in these newly independent countries lacked civic virtue, an essential element for a well-functioning participatory sovereign. To address this weakness, Bolívar assigned to an active and paternalistic state the burden of educating "the people" and forming them into "citizens." Chávez has reinterpreted these ideas, making political participation the building block of his Bolivarian message without paying heed to Bolívar's concerns for civic virtue. In his debased Bolivarianism, participation is both an end and a means; "the people" are to become citizens, whose main task is mass participation. What Chávez really means by political enfranchisement is mass politics.

Many of Bolívar's political ideas were shaped by his teacher and mentor Simón Rodríguez. Born in Caracas in 1771, Rodríguez was a fascinating figure: a Venezuelan utopian philosopher, formed on a steady diet of European thinkers, who has often been called the Fourier of South America. His most extraordinary achievement, though, was his education of the young Bolívar. This took place in the 1780s and early 1790s on a desolate Venezuelan estate, where Rodríguez used as his only pedagogical tool Rousseau's *Emile*. Rodríguez's commitment to his pupil's education extended well into Bolívar's adulthood, when they traveled together to France and Italy to witness Napoleon's coronation and discussed what the grand philosophies and the turbulent events of the times meant for the Spanish colonies.

While it is true that much of Rodríguez's influence on Chávez's ideas is present indirectly through Bolívar, Rodríguez's own thoughts on the need for homegrown political solutions left a very deep mark as well. In his pamphlet *Invention or Error*, which was written in 1828, Rodríguez observed: "Where are we to find models? Spanish America is original. Original should be its institutions and its government. And original the processes by which it creates the former and the latter. Either we invent or we err." This is very much the spirit of Chávez: the belief in the uniqueness of his historical situation combined with the belief in the development of suitable political institutions.

At the center of Chávez's Bolivarian universe is the symbiosis of the army and the people, and this idea he picked up from Ezequiel Zamora. Zamora was a merchant who became a revolutionary general. He led the fight against the oligarchic government in Venezuela's Federal War in the 1860s. To many Venezuelans, Chávez included, Zamora's commitment to a popular but militarily led revolt against social injustice was Bolivarian in spirit. But while Bolívar himself was a great soldier concerned with social justice, his projects of participatory politics veered more toward education in civic virtue than armed revolt. Zamora, on the other hand, believed that armed peasant revolts were the only political force in Latin America that would secure political participation and social justice for the disadvantaged. Much of Chávez's language is reminiscent of one of Zamora's slogans: "free men, free land, popular elections, and horror of the oligarchy."

This idiosyncratic ideological concoction sounded like nonsense when Chávez was running for president in the 1990s: populism, utopianism, and touches of Marxism all dressed up in the colors of Venezuela's national flag. But anybody who has carefully read Venezuela's new constitution knows that this variety of Bolivarianism is now the law of the land. The new constitution is the institutional realization of this ideology, and it is Chávez's most significant, if questionable, political achievement.

Even a cursory review of the constitution reveals this. By establishing instruments of direct democracy such as popular legislative initiatives, consultative and revocatory referendums, and people's assemblies, the new constitution claims to surpass the flimsiness of representative democracy by supplanting it with what Chávez calls a "protagonist" system, or *democracia protagónica*. This virtually unmediated connection between leader and nation is further strengthened by the constitution's streamlining of legislative power (the bicameral system was supplanted by the unicameral National Assembly) and its concentration of presidential power (the presidential term is now six years instead of five, and immediate re-election is permitted). And although the constitution only slightly altered existing laws to permit soldiers to vote in elections, there has been a significant expansion of the military's role in civilian and political life through a civilian-military cooperation program called Bolívar 2000. Finally, the idea of a

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regional federation is given constitutional status, establishing that Latin American and Caribbean integration shall be promoted and favored by the Bolivarian Republic in order to create a "community of nations that defends the economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental interests of the region."

This new constitution, and the laws decreed or legislated to support it, have truly transformed the country's political culture. Walk into any office in Venezuela, visit a business leader who sympathizes with the opposition or a journalist who criticizes Chávez, and you will find on their desks Chávez's little blue book, a pocket-size Bolivarian Constitution. It is not just the president who waves it in the air while speaking; it is the ordinary people who seem to be agreeing that this is indeed their own cherished dispensation. The constitution has become Venezuela's new civil religion.

Venezuelans seem to have bought the idea of *democracia protagónica* hook, line, and sinker. Whatever the problem, the preferred Venezuelan solution is clear: take it to the streets, agitate, organize, demonstrate, clamor. Anyone visiting Caracas these days should be prepared for daily demonstrations and counter-demonstrations that often take over the city and carry on into the night, the racket of banging pots and honking cars preventing any sleep. And while some demonstrations can go on peacefully for days—as in Altamira Park, which military officers took over and proclaimed a "liberated zone" when they declared themselves in civil disobedience—other demonstrations have turned violent and ended with a number of people dead, as they did on December 6 and January 3. For their part, Chávez's supporters have organized themselves into small groups called Circulos Bolivarianos (Bolivarian Circles), neighborhood associations registered with the government that can approach it directly to have communal problems solved.

The opposition believes that the Circulos are really vigilante cells, armed and ready to use violence against any democratic advance against Chávez. Many have accused the Circulos of being responsible for the armed confrontation during the coup in April. The opposition has coalesced into the Coordinadora Democrática, an umbrella association headed by business and civil society leaders that has the support of the most powerful unions and business associations as well as some dissident military figures. Some of the most dramatic confrontations between the Circulos and the Coordinadora took place in early November outside the office of Caracas Mayor Alfredo Peña, a former supporter of Chávez who has become one of his most ferocious critics. The violent skirmishes led to the government's order of a military takeover of Peña's Metropolitan Police, which Chávez has accused of being the actual culprit of the April melee.

V.

THIS CONSTANT EXERCISE in street democracy has turned Venezuela into what can only be described as a hyper-democracy, a state in which political passions rule and neither side seems capable of offering responsible solutions. Venezuela is in a terrible political crisis, but it is not a crisis of democratic shortage, it is a crisis of democratic excess. The country is living out a political experiment in which a messianic conception of democracy has been put into effect through the legal order, and in which the popular classes, now convinced that political participation means salvation, rule directly with and through the president, circumventing all other institutions except perhaps the military. As any taxi driver in Caracas will tell you, with Chávez the people rule. Carl Schmitt would have applauded.

So what is to be done? How can anyone convince a people who have come to conceive of democracy as nothing less than redemption that there are more moderate conceptions of politics that are genuinely democratic? Unfortunately, such good liberal sense is not being heard from Chávez's opposition. It has failed to take a consistent stance, vacillating between acting within the legal order by working for a consultative referendum on his rule in February and acting anti-democratically by demanding that he resign and by organizing the indefinite general strike that has paralyzed the country. It is understandable that the opposition is at its wit's end, frustrated with Chávez's insistence on dialogue while he simultaneously insists that he will heed no other electoral possibility except the referendum permitted by the constitution in August. This sense of frustration drives many Venezuelans toward non-institutional, non-democratic alternatives, which in truth will not resolve the problem. Chávez may eventually disappear, but his supporters are not going anywhere. And the opposition's present line of reasoning fails to conceive of a way of incorporating them into the system, which is the only way that Venezuela will find peace. The Chavistas see only two options at present: Chávez and his redemptive democracy or someone like Pedro Carmona, a throwback to the days of corruption and entitled privilege.

The international community seems to have understood that the only way out of the current impasse is to utilize the present "Bolivarian" legal order as a platform for change. The roundtable dialogue organized under the auspices of the United Nations Development Program, the Organization of American States, and the Carter Center has prevented the present crisis from collapsing into all-out civil war, but it has not delivered anything substantial in terms of agreements. While the government and the opposition initially agreed to sit down and attempt to define an acceptable institutional answer, neither party is truly committed to the process. The opposition has set unrealistic goals, and it has continued to flirt with non-democratic means to achieve them. They have not only called for Chávez's resignation and used the ongoing strike as leverage; they have also radicalized the situation as much as possible, hoping to provoke a coup or a state of emergency. And Chávez has remained inflexible, daring the opposition to continue its tactics and refusing to accept anything short of the midterm referendum on his rule, which, given its requirements, he is likely to win.

But it is imperative that the international community demand that the dialogue continue, and that both parties take it more seriously. The reason is that the crisis in Venezuela may portend a larger Latin American malaise. Other countries in Latin America (and beyond) share the Venezuelan exasperation with party politics and the ordinary forms of democracy; and so it would be reckless to leave the field to anti-democratic and hyper-democratic forces. The war for democracy is a war with many fronts.

THE GOOD SENSE shown by the international organizations brokering the dialogue between the Venezuelan government and the opposition is regrettably not to be found in some of those who report and explain the situation to the outside world. It is truly unfortunate, given how shallowly the American press has covered Venezuela's increasingly treacherous situation, that the only accessible assessment of this important political process should be Richard Gott's hagiographic study of Chávez.

Gott, a former literary editor of the British daily *The Guardian*, wrote *In the Shadow of the Liberator* after traveling to Venezuela in 1999. Conceived as a revision of his earlier study of regional revolutionary groups, the book falls squarely within an old and lamentable tradition of politi-

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cal writing about Latin America. It is a tradition in which writers whose knowledge of the region is limited to running with guerrillas are touted as experts, and whose romantic predisposition has clouded their ability to judge any regional political development since the good old days of revolution in the 1960s. Thus the most important contribution of Gott's book may be an unintended one: it reminds us of the dangers in being witness to, and then writing about, power. Gott is not unaware of these temptations, but he blithely discounts them by confessing that "reporters have always been susceptible to the charms of Latin American radical strongmen, and I am no exception." Alas, experience has starkly shown that the distance between fascination and complicity is perilously small. Lori Berenson is neither the first nor the last to have traveled it.

Still, anyone interested in learning about Chávez's presidency and his political project will find in Gott's book the basics of the story, some of it told in vivid prose, especially when Gott is recounting his personal meetings with Chávez. The problem is that while the essential elements are all there—the history of Venezuela's political crisis, Chávez's genesis from a military officer to a political candidate, the political forces that supported and opposed him, the ideological roots of Chávez's Bolivarianism and policies in his first years in government—they are simply an excuse for Gott to present Chávez as the newest of the revolutionary left in Latin America.

According to Gott, Chávez is the true heir of Castro and his brand of revolution. Chávez, Gott observes, "is perceived as 'the new kid on the block' with everything to play for, a radical former army officer whose anti-imperialist rhetoric echoes that of Fidel. His dramatic plans for Venezuela and for Latin America are as wide-ranging as those of the Cuban leader once were." He should be considered a "serious revolutionary trying to carve out a new programme for Latin America," whose first goal is "to revive a nationalist discourse in the age of globalization." And Gott judges that this revival has already borne fruit: it has "issued a new prospectus for development in South America, and one with implications in Washington as well.... Globalization may be the disease of the new millennium, but antibodies to combat it are slowly being created."

Such a platitudinous left-wing picture of Chávez utterly misses the novelty of the phenomenon. It also misreads the larger implications of Venezuela's political transformation. The view of Chávez as the reincarnation of the failed revolutionary left scants the significance of Chávez's messianic-democratic project. It presents instead a cartoonish, outdated image that pundits and policymakers the world over can discount as outrageous or innocuous. But Chávez is not a chapter in the history of revolution, he is a chapter in the history of democratization. His ideal of *democracia protagónica* has been embraced because it constitutes a response to the overwhelming skepticism in Latin America about the value of political moderation. And this frustration with the banality of everyday democracy is becoming an increasingly familiar political phenomenon, in Venezuela and elsewhere. For this reason, the beginning of wisdom in these societies is to insist again and again that the spirit of democratization is not the spirit of redemption.

Baffled by this new political challenge, the responses to Chávez so far have either been nostalgic, like Richard Gott's, or frenzied, like those of Chávez's most reactionary adversaries. The recent electoral victories of Brazil's new president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a longtime radical politician with the Partido dos Trabalhadores, and other left-wing political outsiders, such as Lucio Gutiérrez in Ecuador, do not suggest the rise of a new left anti-liberal coalition in the hemisphere; but they do reflect a broader Latin-American disenchantment with political establishments and political processes. The danger is that these societies, in their frustration with party politics, might tragically equate this frustration with an aversion to democracy, and find the exhilarations of hyper-democracy irresistible. But hyper-democracy does not mean more democracy. Quite the contrary. Hyper-democracy is really a pathology of democracy, a pseudo-democracy. The consequences of this populist excess are visible today in Venezuela, and they are truly alarming. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 4

including Jewish believers, sometimes experience with their beliefs. If they find that they can no longer defend a belief, then they should reject it; and I do not think that their intellectual integrity will impair their spiritual integrity, even if it causes them pain. If truth is universal, as Buckley rightly asserts, then so is falsehood. Anyway, a doubting life is always rougher than a believing life.

Which brings us, and a particular pleasure for a Jew it always is, to idolatry. I am hardly indifferent to idolatry. In fact, I cannot regard the doctrine of the Incarnation as anything but idolatry. If idolatry consists in the divinization of matter, then the divinization of Jesus is idolatrous. I do not see that it makes a philosophical difference if the lucky matter in question is a dead Hittite stone or a living Nazarene man. The worship of human clay is still the worship of clay, and I remain grateful to Yahweh that I am not beholden to it.

Lead weight

TO THE EDITORS:

The difference between merely having an elevated level of a substance in one's body and suffering from poisoning by that substance is that only in the latter instance does one show symptoms of poisoning ("Toxic," December 23). Thus, I was puzzled by the following from Jonathan Cohn's article: "These statements seem to put [William] Banner well outside mainstream scientific discussion: 'If he's saying there's no such thing as asymptomatic lead poisoning, I'd have to disagree,' says John Graef, a well-known expert."

Mainstream scientific discussion does not define poisoning as displaying an arbitrarily chosen level of a substance in one's blood. Rather, it accords with the dictionary definition of poisoning, which refers to killing or harming with poison. If there are no symptoms (killing or harming), there is no poisoning. Graef's statement gives away the fact that he (and those who set the "poisonous" level) considers a non-poisonous level of lead to be poisonous.

MARSHALL E. DEUTSCH
Sudbury, Massachusetts

JONATHAN COHN REPLIES:

"Asymptomatic lead poisoning" refers to cognitive or neurological damage that, although very real, might not show up on a medical exam. For example, a child who has been exposed to lead from an early age might seem completely normal, showing none of the symptoms (such as anemia or severe abdominal pains) associated with high levels of lead in the blood. Yet the lead exposure may have stunted the child's intellectual development all the same—i.e., were it not for the lead, the child might have a higher IQ or fewer emotional problems, etc. There's no way to measure the damage on an individual basis, of course, since there's no way to know how intelligent any given child might have been. But decades of epidemiological studies, which look at large groups of people, have shown convincingly that lead has this effect. ■

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PARIS DIARIST

Manqué

I WAS 23 WHEN I SAW JOSÉPHINE Baker—from afar, of course. She was speaking at Martin Luther King Jr.'s "March on Washington," and her words about the impending threats to that "salt and pepper" crowd seemed, at least as I remember them, to intuit the impending collapse of the multiracial union that made that day and that movement so exhilarating. The Baker legend, dating from the 1920s, was sultry and sassy, and it sprang both from the showbiz Folies Bergères and the brainy tables at Le Metropôle. Her D.C. appearance was a symbolic and tentative return from the inner and outer exile that had taken her to—and kept her in—Paris. Baker's life carried a message, as did James Baldwin's, that American Negroes could be more themselves in France than in the United States. That idea had devotees among many bohemians, intellectuals, and *intellectuals manqué*—me among them. I once bought an original and quite pricey Baker poster (in Tel Aviv of all places) and immediately felt the reproach in her discriminating eyes. A black college classmate of mine who based himself in Paris, a jazz pianist, told me again and again how unprejudiced France was. Looking back, I suspect these messages were largely fantasy.

FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF REAL history, rather than idiosyncratic autobiography, the notion of France—to say nothing of Scandinavia—as a racial idyll seems preposterous. Today, the Danes and the Norwegians seem nearly hysterical at the intrusion on their prissy monoculture of a few thousand Balkan and Kurdish immigrants. As for the French, their colonial policy was often brutal—brutal enough in Algeria to provoke books such as Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, authentic testaments of rage as therapy. Given that context, isn't it possible that African Americans such as Baker and Baldwin were taken in as exotics—welcomed at dinner tables by people eager to prove their superiority to white America—and never really noticed the tens of thousands of Ivorians, North Africans, and Senegalese sweeping the city streets?

BACK THEN, AT LEAST, FRANCE HAD A unifying idea, *l'idéologie republicaine*, embraced by all except the Catholic right. But today, that idea carries far less weight—it certainly does not inspire Arab or African immigrants and their descendents. Indeed, France is witnessing imperialism's revenge upon the old imperium. In this respect, the East Asians of the empire are, quite like in the United States, an ideal counter-minority: They work especially hard, their kids study diligently, their social ethos is accommodating if not yet exactly civic-minded. They are at home on the streets of the sixth arrondissement and the seventh, and they are targets of rancor almost nowhere. This cannot be said about the Muslim and African communities. True, Jean-Marie Le Pen and his Front National were vanquished in the second round of last year's election. But that is largely because their opponents on the center and right responded to the electoral challenge with an effective anti-immigrant message of their own. Le Pen actually was robbed. *Salut*! But many working-class voters in once solidly socialist and even communist redoubts, such as the Paris suburb of Choisy-le-Roi, now cast their ballots for racialists nonetheless.

ASIDE FROM THOSE EXTREME-nationalist nostalgics on the aging Vichyite and ultramontane right, there is little anti-Semitism among French conservatives today. They certainly do not make alliances with, or excuses for, people who cite the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as evidence of anything. Alas, this cannot be said for the old and young left that once prided itself on its principled animus to racisms of all sorts. *La Nouvelle Judeophobie*, written by Director of Research at the Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique Pierre-Andre Taguieff and published in 2001 by Fayard, painstakingly documents how the core expressions of the self-described "anti-racist" left—its intellectuals, academics, journalists, bienpensants, and artists—are downright anti-Semitic. These people are not Islamists, nor do they have icons of Karl Marx sequestered in their closets. They are your ordinary readers of *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, accustomed to uttering dicta and having them taken seriously. And their views are echoed by the polled public opinion of ordinary Frenchmen.

THESE DICTA DO NOT ONLY BECOME public opinion. They are translated into acts, acts of violence against Jews and their communal life. And, since the ideological justification for the demonization of Jews—the domination of the Palestinians by the Israelis—is already firmly in place, the revulsion that meets these acts is not revulsion at all but finicky distaste and embarrassment. The sins of the Jews, after all, are obvious. They are in the American camp. They are at peace with science, technology, and the rule of law. They create material wealth. But all this still leaves a large question: What is the grand "progressive" vision for which the French left fights, which the Zionists and Jews are insidiously holding back? In the grand conflicts of the last century, there was always a left-wing structure of Manichaeanism. On the one side: imperialism and capitalism. On the other: a compelling and revolutionary dream. The dreams turned out to be nightmares. But they were dreams, nonetheless. Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Che, the Viet Cong, the Sandinistas, always a man and a movement saying they aimed to build a better world, which they actually tried to describe. In the end, of course, the better world did not arrive: In its place were death camps, mass deportations, forced famines, massacres, reeducation programs, prisons of the body, and greater prisons of the soul.

SO WHAT DREAM DO THE PALESTINIans propose to their own people and the world? Nothing—save their purported innocence against the all-powerful Jews. What hero of the struggle have the Palestinians produced to inspire those whose aid they covet? No Gandhi, certainly. No Mandela. And no Weizmann or Ben-Gurion either. Their present hero is Saddam Hussein. Do they envision a classless society? No. A transparent society, a democratic society, an accountable society? No, no, and no again. Will they transform and free the lives of women, of despised tribes, of gay people, of skeptics? Not a chance. By what vision then will they judge themselves? Nobody says because nobody knows.

WHICH IS WHY I BELIEVE THAT THE many in France and the others in Europe (and the puny few in the United States, such as the Episcopal bishops of Massachusetts) who are entranced by the Palestinian cause, who are called and call themselves peace workers, are drawn to the empty idea of Palestine simply because they despise Jews. *C'est ça*. This, at least, explains their fervor. Nothing else can explain it, and nothing does.

MARTIN PERETZ

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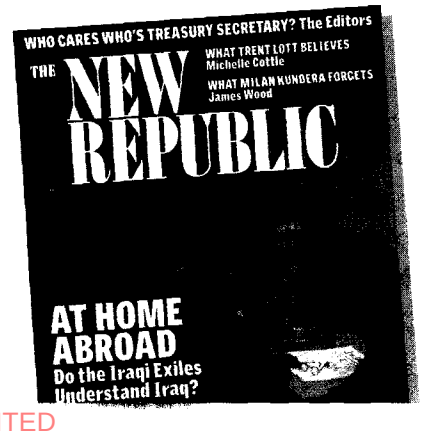

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Subspecialty Health Care in the United States: More Is Better!

Scott W. Atlas, M.D., is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and a professor of radiology and *chief of neuroradiology* at the Stanford University Medical Center.

The past decade has seen dramatic changes in the U.S. health care marketplace. More than two-thirds of patients in the United States are now enrolled in managed-care networks administered by conglomerate, cost-concerned managed-care bureaucracies. Despite managed care, however, health care costs have continued to rise—placing expensive new medical technologies at risk in discussions of containing health care costs.

Although the United States is leading the world into a new era in medicine with the convergence of advances in molecular biology, medical imaging, and minimally invasive diagnosis and therapy, a trend toward non-state-of-the-art technologies is directly correlated with the degree of managed-care penetration. We must realize that **reducing the availability of advanced medical technology will drastically affect our high standard of health care.**

A recent study by researchers at Dartmouth claims that the more subspecialties in health care, the more expensive the care, without significant benefits to the patient. These flawed conclusions received widespread news coverage and conveyed the dangerous implication that the linchpins of the United States health care system—subspecialty care and its associated advanced technology—are simply wastes of money.

Why are such studies misleading? Because the patient outcome measured is patient mortality, which is easily quantified by researchers despite its gross oversimplification of the end point. Most medical researchers agree that more subtle and complex parameters, such as quality of life, more relevantly assess the effects of sophisticated medical care. Indeed, **when experienced subspecialists perform complex medical procedures, numerous studies show improved outcomes.** Similarly, advanced medical imaging technologies may or may not influence mortality statistics, yet more rapid diagnosis using noninvasive, pain-free, and cost-effective methods is an important advantage.

Oversimplifying a complex issue can be dangerous. The widespread publicity generated by the Dartmouth study indicates the highly charged issue of expensive health care in the United States. The rising costs of health care, most of which are a result of technological advances, cannot continue to be tolerated by the current system. Yet technological innovation defined American medicine in the twentieth century. Leading-edge technology, and, more important, access to it, is often cited as the key difference between U.S. and other health care systems. Moreover, it is naïve to think that the uses of specialized medical technologies are best determined by generalists (a point well understood by the medical community).

The United States has the most sophisticated health care in the world. Advances in medical technology, which are essential to improving medical diagnoses and developing new therapies, are expensive and demand highly developed knowledge at the subspecialist level. Because we lead and teach the world the newest advances in medicine, we must sustain the commitment to new medical technologies and subspecialty care. Any proposals to contain health care costs need to ensure the continued development of medical technology.

— Scott W. Atlas, M.D.

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